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# **The Poverty of Ecology**

*Heidegger, Living Nature and Environmental  
Thought*

by

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**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy in Philosophy**

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**For Julia**

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## Declaration

The author declares that this thesis is entirely his own work. The thesis has not been submitted for a degree at any other university.

Sections 17 and 20 consist of revised versions of material submitted for publication under the title: 'The Word's Silent Spring: Heidegger and Herder on Animality and the Origin of Language' which is due to appear in Ladelle McWhorter and Gail Stenstad eds. *Heidegger and the Earth: Essays in Environmental Philosophy*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Expanded ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press: Forthcoming).

## Abstract

This thesis examines the question of living nature and its bearing on ecological thought in the light of the philosophy of Martin Heidegger. The difficulty of adequately thinking about living nature in the terms developed in *Being and Time* (1927) is taken as the starting point for the investigation. The thesis concentrates on Heidegger's thought in the period beginning with the 1929/30 lectures *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude* and ending with the courses on *Heraclitus* in 1943 and 1944. In this 'middle period' Heidegger attempts to formulate a phenomenology of animal life and then a thinking of the place of living nature in the 'history of being' which does not return to the vitalist principles with which he had previously broken. The thesis considers the extent to which these attempts to find another way to think about living nature are successful. To this end a variety of lecture and seminar courses together with manuscripts from this period are discussed, some of which have only recently become available, including the seminars on Nietzsche's second *Untimely Meditation* and Herder's *Treatise on the Origin of Language* and the manuscripts *Besinnung* and *Die Geschichte des Seyns*. Contemporary responses to Heidegger's thinking of living nature and its relevance for philosophical ecology, including those of Jacques Derrida, Michel Haar, Giorgio Agamben and Michael Zimmerman are re-evaluated on this basis.

The guiding concept of the investigation is the notion of poverty, which plays a variety of roles in the context under discussion. In particular, the thesis presented in *The Fundamental Concept of Metaphysics* that the animal is 'poor in world', has been seriously misunderstood by many commentators. If the poverty in question is properly understood as a thesis concerning the fundamental attunement of the encounter between Dasein and living nature, then we can see how this concept of poverty develops in various directions in the following years, informing Heidegger's understanding of the capabilities of living beings, of the 'earth', the silence of language and finally allows for the development of a thinking of freedom that is proper to the earth itself, rather than a development beyond the earthly. It is argued that the notion of poverty is an essential counter to a prevalent Spinozist and Nietzschean strain in ecological thought that thinks living nature on the basis of plenum or overflow and concedes no space for a true freedom of the earth.

# Abbreviations

Citations from Heidegger's works are referenced to the English translation first, where one is available, followed after a forward slash by the reference to the German text. All references are to works by Heidegger unless otherwise indicated.

All references abbreviated GA refer to the *Gesamtausgabe* edition of Heidegger's works and are followed by the number of the volume referred to. Full bibliographical details for each volume can be found in the first part of the bibliography below.

Abhandlung *Abhandlung Über den Ursprung der Sprache*, Johann Gottfried Herder, in *Herder Werke, Frühe Schriften 1764-1772, Vol 1* (Frankfurt a.M.: Deutscher Klassiker, 1985)

AMT *Aristotle's Metaphysics Theta 1-3*, trans. by Walter Brogan and Peter Warnek (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995)  
[GA 33: *Aristoteles, Metaphysik* □ 1-3. *Von Wesen und Wirklichkeit der Kraft* (Frankfurt a.M.: Vittorio Klostermann, 1981)]

BT *Being and Time* trans. by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper and Row, 1962)  
[SZ: *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1993)]

CP *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)* trans. by Parvis Emad and



Kenneth Maly (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999)

[GA 65: *Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)* (Frankfurt a. M.: Vittorio Klostermann, 1989)]

FCM *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, trans. William McNeill and Nicholas Walker (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995)

[GA 29/30: *Die Grundbegriffe der Metaphysik. Welt-Endlichkeit-Einsamkeit* (Frankfurt a. M.: Vittorio Klostermann, 1992)]

IM *Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. by Gregory Fried and Richard Polt (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000)

[EM: *Einführung in die Metaphysik* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer: 1953)]

M *Mindfulness*, trans. by Parvis Emad and Thomas Kalary (London: Continuum, 2006)

[GA 66: *Besinnung* (Frankfurt a. M.: Vittorio Klostermann, 1997)]

OBT *Off the Beaten Track*, ed. and trans. Julian Young and Kenneth Haynes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002)

[HW: *Holzwege*, 4<sup>th</sup> edn. (Frankfurt a. M.: Vittorio Klostermann, 1963)]

OEL *On the Essence of Language: The Metaphysics of Language and the Essencing of the Word; concerning Herder's Treatise On the Origin of language*, trans. Wanda Torres Gregory and Yvonne Unna (Albany: SUNY, 2004)

[GA 85: *Vom Wesen der Sprache: Die Metaphysik der Sprache und Die Wesung des Wortes zu Herders Abhandlung "Über den Ursprung der Sprache"* (Frankfurt a. M.: Vittorio Klostermann, 1999)]

Parmenides *Parmenides*, trans. by André Schulwer and Richard Rojcewicz  
(Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992)

PM *Pathmarks*, ed. William McNeill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998)

[WM: *Wegmarken*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn. (Frankfurt a. M.: Vittorio Klostermann, 1996)]

Treatise 'Treatise on the Origin of Language' Johann Gottfried Herder, in  
*Philosophical Writings*, ed. Michael N. Forster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002)

## Introduction

### *§1 Poverty, Spirit and Environment*

The fundamental attunement of ecological thought is a sense of poverty. It is a strange sense, even in the midst of increasing wealth, development and progress, of becoming poorer. Of course, poverty that results from the lack of access to land and material resource remains the overwhelming experience of the majority of people in the world. The recollection of that fact is fundamentally bound to the sense of poverty which informs environmentalism. It is in poverty that social justice and environmental concern are joined, rather than forming two separate areas of concern which occasionally coincide and at other times conflict, as each struggles to fulfil its own objective.

The poverty which concerns us here however, the poverty which initiates ecological concern, is not only poverty in material resource. Neither is it a poverty simply opposed to 'material' poverty. It is no 'poverty in spirit', if that means the severing of attachment to worldly or earthly things.<sup>1</sup> The poverty that informs ecological concern is perhaps best initially understood as a poverty of experience, as Walter Benjamin described it:

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<sup>1</sup> For an instructive comparison of Heidegger's thought to Meister Eckhart's sermon on 'poverty of spirit', see John D. Caputo, 'The Poverty of Thought: A Reflection on Heidegger and Eckhart' in *Heidegger: The Man and the Thinker*, ed. Thomas Sheehan (Chicago: Precedent Publishing, 1981) pp.209-216. However, one of Caputo's observations which I cannot agree with is the idea that for 'thought' there are no 'environmental factors' to be taken into consideration when reflecting upon, for example, the blooming of a rose. Caputo seems to equate such factors with mechanistic causal explanations. As should become clear during the course of this thesis, I think that 'poverty' is the key to developing a kind of ecological thought which avoids such an equation.



'With this tremendous development of technology, a completely new poverty has descended on mankind.' A poverty of experience that brings with it, as its reverse side, an overwhelming wealth of ideas, styles and ideologies. In the midst of this poverty of experience which is, 'not merely poverty on the personal level, but poverty of human experience in general,' Benjamin nevertheless sees the potential for a new kind of 'positive barbarism': 'For what does poverty of experience do for the barbarian? It forces him to start from scratch; to make a new start; to make a little go a long way; to begin with a little and build up further, looking neither left nor right.'<sup>2</sup> We are rich in lived experience (*Erlebnis*) but poor in transformational experience (*Erfahrung*), which is a distinction that Martin Heidegger too insisted upon. The poverty of experience must be converted into an experience of poverty.

The 'poverty of ecology', as I understand it, has three interwoven meanings. On the first level, it expresses a dissatisfaction with certain environmental philosophies that try to derive normative standards in politics and ethics more or less directly from an 'ecological' understanding of nature and which, inversely, can be seen to project normative axioms into nature.<sup>3</sup> This is not to say that we should in any way reaffirm a

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2 Walter Benjamin, 'Experience and Poverty' in *Selected Writings Vol.2 1927-1934*, trans. Rodney Livingstone and Others, ed. Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland and Gary Smith (Cambridge, Mass: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999) p.732

3 A very important study which critiques both 'derivative' and 'dualist' modes of environmental thought is John M Meyer's *Political Nature: Environmentalism and the Interpretation of Western Thought*. Meyer finds both the idea that Western philosophy has always 'derived' its political concepts from concepts of nature and the idea that it has simply separated the two realms to be unconvincing. He backs up this critique with very illuminating readings of Hobbes and Aristotle and goes on to advocate a 'dialectical' understanding of the relationship between the concepts of politics and nature in Western history. He then examines various political struggles in which this dialectic can be seen to be

strict fact/value distinction. Ecological science, for example, has got a crucial role to play in our thinking of these issues and it seems to me that, although it is important to revise politically skewed concepts such as the formerly popular notion of a 'balance of nature', this science cannot and should not be cut off from political action or metaphysical reflection. Nevertheless, I do not think that ecological science can be taken as the foundation or touchstone of environmental philosophy. Just as science can call us to rethink our ontological and metaphysical prejudices, it can also perpetuate them in hidden ways. This is perhaps especially the case when a 'paradigm shift' or revolution in 'worldview' seems to turn everything on its head. Ecological science must therefore be drawn into an ongoing philosophical deconstruction.

On the second level, where environmental philosophy begins to negotiate the metaphysical terrain on which both ecological science and politics find themselves, 'poverty' is not only something negative but refers to a generally hidden resource of ecological thought. In a way analogous to Karl Marx's critique of the philosophy of poverty in *The Poverty of Philosophy*, to which my title alludes, allegiance to certain philosophical and ontological assumptions can cause one to miss the true force of poverty. For Marx, socialists and Communists begin by seeing in poverty nothing but poverty, 'without seeing the revolutionary and subversive side, which will overthrow the old society.'<sup>4</sup> Of course, such a thought can lead to a dangerous and suspicious

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instantiated and highlights the importance of *place* for understanding political differences in the environmental movement. The final notion would chime well with some of Heidegger's later thought, although Heidegger is not mentioned in this study. Whilst agreeing with much of Meyer's analysis, I would hesitate to call the relationship between philosophy of nature and politics 'dialectical'. The present study provides a somewhat different approach, proposing another way to characterise the relationship between nature and politics.

4 Karl Marx, *The Poverty of Philosophy* (New York: International Publishers, 1963) pp.125-126



glorification of poverty as the engine of revolution. Here, as I have said, it is not so much social and material deprivation, but the sense and experience of poverty which accompanies environmental destruction that makes us poor. We must maintain the idea that there is an indispensable sense of poverty which is the true force of ecological thought, in the face of those critics who see in ecological thought nothing but pure negativity, a 'doom saying' without positive vision. The inability to maintain the sense of poverty alongside affirmation and even to affirm that sense of poverty itself is perhaps the greatest threat to ecological thought.

This leads on to the final sense which I give to the poverty of ecology. Rather than being a denunciation of ecology, I wish to make the case for developing 'poverty' as the key term in an ecological thought. A term that can draw together various strands of metaphysical and political thinking and overcome many of the difficulties which arise for both compartmentalised environmental philosophy and more 'holistic' visions which eliminate all 'negativity' as either illusory or part of the engine of progress. It is through various modes of 'privation' that we can bring Martin Heidegger's critique of the metaphysics of presence to bear on ecological science and environmental politics.

Heidegger has been claimed and repudiated as an ecological thinker for well over two decades. The depth and breadth of his deconstruction of metaphysics certainly takes in all of the central themes which concern the body of environmental thought and has guided and redirected many of those concerns. On the other hand, of course, concern about Heidegger's political engagement has frequently and naturally crystallised around the themes of 'ecology.' Was it not, after all, a pathos filled 'return to nature' and desire to establish an affinity with the earth that made up a large part of National Socialist

ideology? It is not for nothing that ecological thought has been dogged by the worry that it attempts to establish an 'eco-fascism.'<sup>5</sup> This has been brought about not only by the concern that 'normal' political decision making processes will be set aside in the face of what is portrayed as an overwhelming crisis, but the claim that ecological thought tends towards a holism which dissolves all individuals and singular relations into the whole and views the earth as organism. I try to elucidate and deal with some of these concerns as they arise in relation to Heidegger's thinking of the Earth in Chapter 3. For now I only wish to point out that this is why I have chosen to focus on the problem of 'living nature'. This focus is important for two reasons. Firstly, because it addresses a second area of concern for Heideggerian thought and exegesis, namely the adequacy of Heidegger's understanding of 'animality.' At the same time it enables me to address an issue of wider interest in environmental philosophy, namely, how the 'holistic' concerns of environmentalism are to be reconciled with our responsibility towards individual living beings.

In order to introduce some of these themes and to begin to show why I think that it is in the sense of poverty that we find one of the most important contributions of Heidegger's thought to environmental philosophy I want to spend some time in this introduction on an reading of Heidegger's essay 'Poverty'.<sup>6</sup> Heidegger presented this text to a small group on 27<sup>th</sup> June 1945, less than two months after the German capitulation. Germany's infrastructure lay in ruins and the country was divided between four occupying forces.

5 The most sustained and influential argument against any ecological 'grand politics' on the basis that it lends itself to totalitarianism or at the very least remains a reactionary romanticism and anti-modernism is to be found in Luc Ferry, *The New Ecological Order*, trans. Carol Volk (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995)

6 This essay was first printed in German in *Heidegger Studies* 1994, Vol.10, pp. 5-11. A working translation can be found in Appendix 1 below.



A time which called for reflection, but not a moment in which 'environmental' concerns could take centre stage. Far more a moment concerned with sheer survival and pressing need. A moment at which the possibilities for reducing human beings to their most basic and base condition, to what looked like a 'bare life', were everywhere being revealed. A moment, one might think, in which broader relations and responsibilities towards the surrounding world would have to be set aside for richer times.

Heidegger begins his essay by taking up a line attributed to Hölderlin:

For us everything is concentrated on the spiritual, we have become poor so  
as to become rich.<sup>7</sup>

First of all, Heidegger asks, who does Hölderlin mean when he says 'for us'? No determinate answer is forthcoming. It is not in any way clear that the German nation, which ten years previously in the *Introduction to Metaphysics* Heidegger had pictured as the saving power of Europe caught in the pincers of Soviet Russia and America, is being addressed. Of course, that Germany had now been effectively crushed in the pincer, but this alone would not, surely, have removed it from its historical destiny, if that destiny had ever been anything more than an expression of military and ideological might. Yet it is now, at least for a moment, altogether unclear whether anyone could still believe in such a destiny. And did Hölderlin believe in anything of the kind? Does 'for us,' mean 'us' the Germans? Us the contemporaries of the turn of the Nineteenth

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7 The Stuttgart edition, which was published after the Hellingrath edition that Heidegger made use of, informs us that the historical sketch above which this line appears was found amongst Hölderlin's papers, but in the handwriting of Christoph Theodor Schwab. Friedrich Hölderlin, *Sämliche Werke: Kleine Stuttgarter Ausgabe*, ed. Friedrich Beissener (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1965) Vol. 4 p.407

Century? It is altogether unclear. What we can be sure of, Heidegger writes, is that when Hölderlin thinks of history he thinks 'in long time periods'. Furthermore, the time which concerns him is not the time of datable occurrences, a time that comes forward most urgently perhaps in a time of war, but the time of a 'secret' event in the history of the West. We might add that when Hölderlin thinks the space and geography of a nation, he thinks in large expanses and is concerned not with the space of determinable borders, but with a 'secret place' where we might locate something like 'the West'.

This becomes even more interesting when a little later Heidegger considers the spiritual situation of the East. Not the far East, but the East of the Eastern Church that set the scene for the spiritual development of Russia. This was the spiritual ground in which Communism had taken root. The seeds sown by Hegel and Marx had sprouted in a soil permeated by a very different spirit. The spiritual development of the East took a different path from the West. The Great Schism was, after all, partly a matter of the *origin of spirit*. In Russia the mystical tradition which flourished in this soil was mediated through German thinkers, Jakob Böhme and then Hegel and Schelling, but it remained Eastern, with a 'magical' essence as dark as the Greek *pneuma* whose breath brought it to life, and which is alive today in ways we cannot imagine. Who are 'we' who cannot imagine it? Perhaps not just the Germans at the end of the war, or their former countrymen on the eastern side of the country, soon to join forces with 'Russian' Communism. Perhaps it also means we who refuse to see in 'mysticism' anything but charlatanry and wilful obscurantism.

So, what is spirit? Jacques Derrida once claimed that Heidegger never asked himself that question. At least not in the mode and form and with the development which he



afforded to his other central questions.<sup>8</sup> At the same time, later in the same text, Derrida says that after 1933 when the quotation marks were lifted from the word, 'Heidegger never stopped interrogating the being of *Geist*.'<sup>9</sup> He even cites an instance in which Heidegger explicitly poses the question. This is not simply an inconsistency on Derrida's part, since it is a question firstly of how far spirit will yield to such an interrogation, whether in questioning we have not already left it behind and secondly of whether Heidegger asks or could ask this question *of himself*. When he asks, he asks it of Trakl and takes up the poet's answer, not necessarily as his own but, it seems, almost without question. The essay 'Poverty', which was only published several years after Derrida made these observations, is extremely interesting in this context. It maintains a position, both chronologically and also in terms of its spirit, almost exactly between the *Introduction to Metaphysics* of 1935 and the interpretation of Trakl of 1953. "Spirit" itself seems to have been veiled once more in quotation marks, whose disappearance in 1935 Derrida found so disturbing. Yet whether the note of caution or even attempt to avoid this term has returned, or whether the quotation marks mark the fact that it is Hölderlin's spirit which is in question, remains unclear.

In order to answer the question of what spirit is for Hölderlin, Heidegger now cites a passage from Hölderlin's essay 'On Religion':

Neither from himself alone, nor only from the objects which surround him, can man experience that more than a mechanical operation, a spirit, a god, is in the world, but [he can experience it] in a more lively relationship raised

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8 Jacques Derrida, *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question* trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989) p.14

9 Ibid p.83

sublimely above (*erhabenen*) bare need (*Notdurft*), in which he stands with that which surrounds him.<sup>10</sup>

The question of spirit thus turns out to be the question of how man relates to that which surrounds him, that is, it is nothing but a question of environment. That has nothing to do with the lifestyle choices or spiritual beliefs of certain environmentalists. It is precisely not in himself alone, nor in surrounding objects, nor in the projection of personal belief onto objects, that man can experience something of spirit. It is only in the relationship itself, only immanently to this relation, that something of spirit can be experienced.

The relationship of spirit is one which is sublimely above bare need. That does not mean, however, that it is raised above worldly interest or involvement. Heidegger comments that Hölderlin also speaks of this height as a height to which man can 'fall', recalling the entire discourse of falling in *Being and Time*, whereby Dasein falls for beings so hard that it forgets all about their being. But the falling at issue here would be falling out of that first love, not in order to forget all about beings in return, but to recollect their being. The sublime relation, which does not extract us from the world but leads us into the depth of our involvement with beings, pervades the relation of human beings to objects and at the same time bears both of these. It is a relationship which cannot wait for the fulfilment of pressing needs. Human beings cannot wait until all their needs have been met in order to develop this relationship with their environment. If they do it may well be too late by the time they get around to it.<sup>11</sup>

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10 'Die Armut' *Heidegger Studies* 10 (1994) p.7

11 We can note in passing that what Hölderlin here calls a 'sublime' relation is already very different to what Kant understood by the sublime, precisely because it cannot be understood in terms of the failure



Hölderlin does not provide any further determination of the character of this relationship, but Heidegger suggests that, 'The sublime relationship in which man stands is the relationship of being to man, so in truth being itself is this relationship, in which the essence of man comes into its own as that essence which stands in this relationship and in so standing protects and inhabits.'<sup>12</sup> For the relation of man to his environment to be 'of spirit', it must be a relation brought about from within the relationship of being to man. That is, a relation to that which surrounds us which is forged in our relation to the space and the leeway (*Spiel-raum*) of being that is no longer modelled on or abstracted from beings. When the aphorism claims that for us everything is concentrated on the spiritual, concentration is not an attitude which is adopted, but is the environmental movement of spirit itself, gathered and centred around the relation of being to our essence.

What this suggests is a way to escape and move beyond the endless debates about where we should place the focal point of environmental thought. Any kind of 'centric' thought of the usual kind becomes redundant, whether it be anthropo-, bio- or eco-centric. First of all because each of these terms can only receive its determination from out the relation of being to ourselves. That relationship now forms the 'centre' or middle of the

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of a subject to grasp an object of cognition. Nevertheless, it would be an important task which I cannot undertake here, to re-read the Third Critique in this context. For the moment it must suffice to say that in *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics* Heidegger also uses the term to characterise life as an elevation of nature over itself, 'a sublimity which is lived in life itself.' (FCM p.278/403) A reading of Kant in the spirit of Heidegger would then have to think this sublimity which is not the failure of cognition together with a 'play' of beauty in nature which is not the play of the faculties of cognition.

12 'Die Armut' *Heidegger Studies* 10 (1994) p.7

circle, but as a relation it cannot form an Archimedean point around which the world moves. As the relation to being, it is not a relation between beings but a relationship that pervades all beings. The environmental relation is thus a ek-centric centre, 'a circle which is nowhere a periphery.'<sup>13</sup>

The thought of such a relationship cannot, of course, resolve all of the pressing questions and conflicts which arise for environmental management. It cannot provide formulas to be followed when a conflict of interests arises between human beings and the environment, between human beings and animals, or between animals and the environment. Rather, the search for such formulas is set aside for a moment so that the fixity and necessity of the interests which are in conflict can be placed in question and perhaps seen in another light.

In his interpretation of the second part of the aphorism Heidegger continues to clarify the environmental relationship which makes up the concentration on the spiritual. 'We have become poor so as to become rich.' What does it mean to become poor? Wherein lies the essence of poverty? We think immediately of not having possessions, even 'doing without' what is necessary. However, the term that I have rendered as 'doing without,' *entbehren*, can also be a sparing, the sparing of possessions, of resources, of time. To be truly poor means to be able to spare nothing, to do without the unnecessary. Finally to *spare* nothing, to give free reign to nothing, to do and be without possession of the unnecessary, yet not to be able to be without the unnecessary to which we belong.

So what are the necessary and the unnecessary which determine poverty? Necessity is determined by need and the compulsion to satisfy needs. In poverty need is not satisfied

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid



and so the poor dwell in the unnecessary. The unnecessary is not determined by compulsion but has its being in the free. Freedom so understood is not a 'free for all', wilful or arbitrary choice. Freedom is a safe-guarding and caring for things in their essence and allowing them to rest in their essence. A relationship not exhausted by the purely negative stance of leaving alone or not using up. Freedom is caring and protecting in an environmental relation which is not determined by need.

In fact, necessity itself is rooted in and turns upon this relation. Freedom and necessity are no longer to be thought of as opposites. We do not escape from need into freedom. Freedom is *Not-wendigkeit*, a turning in need. Not simply a different attitude towards need, but a movement and leeway of need which turns need away from compulsion. Freedom is then thought otherwise than in a long tradition of metaphysical thinking which finds at the heart of freedom an expression and an acceptance of necessity as compulsion. Whether it be the moral compulsion of a categorical imperative or the natural compulsion of natural laws, ultimately both moral and natural necessity rest in a metaphysics of compulsion. Freedom, however, does not flee from necessity but turns necessity inside out.<sup>14</sup> We can then find a freedom in ethics and nature which does not develop from out of a rigid set of laws, but which comes in a certain sense before the law of compulsion.

Being poor in this sense, being able to spare the leeway of nothing that makes free, one

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<sup>14</sup> This may appear to be an odd claim considering that for Kant, who is the figure explicitly referred to in this passage, the moral law only comes into play when human will has been removed from the compulsion of natural law. Clearly natural and moral law are not identical in this case, but the claim is that reason and the moral law do nevertheless *compel* the will of the subject, even if this law comes into conflict with the natural law of interestedness.

is at the same time rich. Becoming rich does not follow upon being poor as something causal. If we are able to spare nothing, to find the leeway and turning in necessity, then we stand in the abundance of being which overflows pressing need in advance. In becoming poor, in sparing nothing and the unnecessary, we become rich.

This, in brief outline, is the sense of poverty that Heidegger explores in his 1945 essay and which I suggest can serve as the starting point for an ecological thought that goes beyond both managerial calculation and the complacency of 'spiritual' holism. For Heidegger this was not simply a retreat, in the face of defeat, from the talk of destiny and apparent triumphalism which is to be found in his manuscripts throughout the preceding decade. He had already begun to develop this sense of poverty. His description of it in a manuscript from 1941, *On the Beginning*, makes clear how central it had become to his thought:

The highest property of humanity which is made ready for the in-abidingness of Da-sein after the overcoming of metaphysics and thus takes over the grounding of the truth of beyng and thus moves into the history of beyng is, following this entrance into Ereignis, *poverty*.

Here poverty does not mean lack, but rather in-abidingness (*Inständigkeit*) (gathered-mind, attunedness) (*das Gemüt, die Gestimmtheit*) into the simple and the singular: this, however, is the essencing of beyng.

From out of it beings first inceptively stand forth in the clearing of the there.



Poverty and giving-

Releasement in the essencing of *Er-eignung*.<sup>15</sup>

Poverty in this sense then is not a lack, but the dispossession of humanity in order to concede space for releasement, for giving and for the clearing in which an appropriation of man to beyng can take place. Far from negativity or lack, poverty is the attunement which Heidegger associates in particular with 'plenitude of beyng.'<sup>16</sup>

The importance of this thought for us comes to the fore, I think, when faced with a great deal of contemporary philosophical ecology which takes its lead from Spinoza.<sup>17</sup> That Heidegger did not write a great deal directly concerned with Spinoza is well known. However, he spent so much time thinking and writing about Schelling, Hegel and Hölderlin that Spinoza could not fail to be implicated in this confrontation. When Hölderlin writes, for instance, in the passage quoted above, that in a certain sublime relationship with what surrounds us we experience that there is more in the world than a mechanical operation, it could well be the case that he has Spinoza's 'mechanical' understanding of the power of God in mind. It is not the mechanical operation of

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15 GA 70, p. 132

16 Ibid

17 See, for example, Arne Naess 'Spinoza and ecology' in *Speculum Spinozanum 1677-1977*, ed. Siegfried Hessing, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977) pp. 418-425 Freya Mathews, *The Ecological Self* (London: Routledge, 1991); Robert Hurley's introduction to Gilles Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, trans. R.Hurley (San Francisco: City Lights, 1988). An important study which is highly critical of the deep ecological 'reconstruction' or rather manipulation of Spinoza's metaphysics is Eccc de Jonge's *Spinoza and Deep Ecology: Challenging Traditional Approaches to Environmentalism* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004). De Jonge goes on to try to find a surer footing for some deep ecological doctrines in a more thorough reading of Spinoza.

entities upon one another which is the direct object of criticism here, but the modelling of the very relation of being to beings on that operation. *Natura naturans* compulsively gives out and expresses its power in *natura naturata*. The only freedom in being or in beings is to follow through on the necessity of nature and of ones own nature. But if ones own nature is nothing but a relation to nature naturing and that naturing is not compelled by the force of its own power, but finds leeway in the midst of its power, then the freedom implied by an ethics of nature would be altogether different. Furthermore, affirmation of the plenitude and abundance of being would no longer be opposed to 'negativity.' Such a thought would find in privation, in no-thing, in withdrawal, the leeway in which that very plenitude and abundance can come forth.

Each of the chapters in this study explores the implications of poverty as the defining feature of an ecological philosophy developed in dialogue with Heidegger. In chapter 1 I address Heidegger's first and only full scale phenomenological investigation of animality, conducted in his lecture course of 1929/30 *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*. In this course Heidegger puts forward the famous and much disputed set of theses: the stone is worldless, the animal is poor in world, man is world-building. There has been much debate and concern about what precisely the 'world-poverty' of the animal amounts to. I address two central criticisms which have been made of Heidegger's approach. The first, forcefully posed by Jacques Derrida, questions the very idea that there is some easily identifiable region of beings which could be named 'the animal' and which has the character of 'animality'. Is it not the dogmatic positing of this thesis which compromises the entire project from the start? Secondly, there is the question of precisely what the 'world-poverty' of the animal is supposed to entail, especially for the relationship between human beings and animals. I



argue that when properly understood, although important difficulties remain, Heidegger's investigation does not falter on either of these points. The thesis concerning animality is a *guiding* thesis, rather than the positing of certain presuppositions as the foundation of a regional ontology. As such it follows the model of metaphysical questioning which Heidegger will later identify as *the* metaphysical procedure, the 'guiding question' which understands being through and from out of beings. This is in tune with the 'met-ontological' experiment which Heidegger conducted in this period following *Being and Time*. Since it is anything but clear from the start what comprises the animal and what the world-poverty of animality consists in, the thesis actually takes on the form of a persistent question concerning living beings. The thesis guides us by returning us to this question. We may then gain an access point to the dimension of living nature without supposing that dimension to be accessible from the start, or ever utterly open to us. Part of the 'world-poverty' of animality is the refusal of complete openness by living beings and therefore the impossibility of fixing axioms as the foundation of a regional ontology of life. The poverty ascribed to the animal world is not identical with the privations which characterise the world of Dasein and the withdrawal which characterises being itself, but it is inextricably bound up with these. Nevertheless, I argue against Levinasian readings (which on the whole would have been rejected by Levinas himself) that see the animal as the ultimate figure of the Other and thus as utterly foreign and transcendent of all 'worldly' experience. It is precisely the ambiguous position between intra-worldly meaningfulness and absolute refusal of disclosure in 'worldly' terms which makes up the character of 'world-poverty'. The animal is other than Dasein, but animality is neither laid out before us from the start nor utterly 'beyond being'. We enter the ecological dimension of animality only through a precise phenomenological investigation of our relation to particular living beings,

because animality is not an homogeneous zone of life but is made up of the interlocking environments of living beings.

In chapter 2 I focus on one of the central problems which arises from Heidegger's account of animality and the 'essence' of living beings in *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*. In that text Heidegger makes a crucial distinction between the 'capacities' (*Fähigkeiten*) of living beings and the 'capabilities' (*Vermögen*) of human beings. He thus introduces a quasi-transcendental approach into the philosophy of life which has great significance for the way in which the 'question of animality' is posed today. I say 'quasi-transcendental' because Kant's philosophy frequently seems to simply posit 'faculties' (*Vermögen*) as the conditions of the possibility of experience. It is Heidegger's strategy, both here and in his readings of Kant, to inquire into the constitution or being of these 'faculties', not in terms of what they are able to do but in terms of what it is that *enables* them as faculties to do anything at all. The primary question as to whether there is an essential continuity or discontinuity between human beings and other animals is generally posed in terms of their abilities, what they can and cannot do. For Heidegger, such a question based on a vague and general concept of 'ability' ignores the possibility that there may be essentially different kinds of ability, in the sense not of being able to do different things, but in so far as the ability itself, 'that which enables', might be essentially different. The question of difference posed on the basis of a general concept of 'ability' has already decided the issue because it presupposes the continuity of ability itself. For Heidegger the fundamental question thus becomes more philosophically complex. It could no longer in principle be decided by empirical inquiry into the various abilities of living beings, but only by phenomenological inquiry into ability itself. I pursue this inquiry in a reading of Heidegger's 1931 lecture course on *Aristotle's*



*Metaphysics Θ: The Essence and Actuality of Force.* I analyse Heidegger's claim that we can find in Aristotle's text the possibility of bringing into view a 'spectrum' of *dynamis*, that is a range of essentially different kinds of ability which can nevertheless be gathered in a logic of *dynamis* as such. It is in this general logic that we see the reappearance of the notion of 'poverty', now as the *sterēsis*, privation, which is to be found in the essence of *dynamis*.

Chapter 3 continues the analysis of this spectrum of *dynamis*, taking up the tail end of the spectrum in the concepts of violence (*Gewalt*) and power (*Macht*). Although capacity and capability were originally attributed to animals and human beings respectively, it now becomes clear that each band of the spectrum does not correspond exactly to a particular ontic species. Human beings employ, participate in and relate to the entire spectrum through the *logos* which gathers the spectrum as a whole. They are also essentially caught up in violence and power relations which do not belong exclusively to them, but make them what they are by constantly transporting their capabilities beyond their own sphere. In turn, the rest of living nature has been caught up in these relations, leading to a 'technicisation' of animality which need not only apply to those beings for whom Heidegger reserves the neo-Nietzschean epithet, the 'technicised animal'. On the other hand, Heidegger also attributes 'power' to the earth, a concept which plays a crucial role in his thought as he develops the project of 'being-historical' thinking. From this perspective the untenability of any environmental ethics which would simply oppose these developments becomes clear. Any such ethics would need to be simultaneously an ecological politics. Not a practice to accompany the theory, but a thinking of the epochal dynamics of earth to accompany the preparation for another beginning and another dwelling. I explore these themes in readings of texts

including *Introduction to Metaphysics, Contributions to Philosophy (from Ereignis)* and *Besinnung* and contrast Heidegger's reading of Sophocles with that provided by Hans Jonas. Jonas attempts to ground the 'principle of responsibility' in a fundamental discontinuity between ancient and modern relations to nature, whilst Heidegger finds in the Sophoclean vision both the roots of the contemporary situation and the potential for another beginning where nature would find another dynamic. Thus 'poverty' takes on a more critical sense in this chapter, as the poverty of responses to the modern ecological situation which do not address that situation as one in which the self-empowerment of power has become the fundamental dynamic of nature itself.

One of the phenomena which arises from this situation is an extension of the 'human' as a characterisation not only of those beings which we ourselves are, but as a way to understand the world; what might in other terms be called a 'humanist worldview.' This is not an illegitimate extension of the human outside of its legitimate boundaries, an 'anthropomorphism' in the usual sense, but a humanisation of the world which was a necessary counterpart of the humanisation of Da-sein. In the final chapter of this thesis I take up the suggestion made in *Contributions to Philosophy* that it is in reflection upon language, that which at first sight seems inextricably bound up with the humanisation of the world and man's projection of himself into the whole of nature, that we can initiate a *re-discovery* of nature from this humanisation. To this end I analyse Heidegger's reflections on Herder's philosophy of language from this 1939 seminar course *On the Essence of Language* and his lecture courses from 1942/43 and 1944 on *Parmenides* and *Heraclitus*. This analysis remains focused on the problem of the relationship between human beings and animals since it is clearly in terms of the possession of *logos* that a fundamental distinction between the two has been posited and dissolved time and again

in the history of metaphysics. I discuss the way in which Heidegger works through the problematic relation of *physis* and *logos* as they inform that history and I argue that in Heidegger's interpretation they are not conflated with one another, as is often claimed, but are both understood as informed by the Greek thinking of *alētheia*. In order to interrupt this history, to project and initiate another beginning, it is therefore necessary to reorientate the uncovering of truth and think through the consequences of this for both language and nature. An important step in the re-discovery of nature is a hearkening to that aspect of language which does not simply let something be seen or bring it to presence. The *silence* of language is the counterpart of the privation and withdrawal of nature.

The main body of this thesis is thus concerned with the 'middle period' of Heidegger's thinking that can be roughly dated between 1929 and 1949. Where it seemed appropriate and helpful I have introduced short discussions of texts from before this period, in particular, *The Fundamental Concepts of Aristotelian Philosophy* from 1924 and *Being and Time* from 1927. Understandably, the vast majority of ecologically minded interpretation has concentrated on Heidegger's late essays, especially 'The Question Concerning Technology,' published in 1953, but originally formulated as part of the Bremen lectures of 1949. Commentators have also been able to draw out ecologically significant aspects of Heidegger's earlier thinking of environmentality. It is only in this middle period, however, that Heidegger tackles in a sustained manner the question of *living nature* as a problem in its own right. At the same time he develops the notion of *poverty* that will act as our guiding thread in what follows. I give some suggestions as to why I think that Heidegger's post-1949 thought cannot tackle the question of living nature in a satisfactory manner in my conclusion.

What I hope to have achieved in this thesis is a step towards a philosophy of living nature that addresses the problem of freedom as the true bequest of Kantian metaphysics.<sup>18</sup> This would be a philosophy of freedom *in* and *of* nature. Not a philosophy that follows the traces of spirit and freedom as they develop from out of nature, but an environmental thought that in itself is already the exercise of spirit and freedom. Freedom will be found in nature when nature itself has been set free.

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18 Schelling claimed that since Kant the central problem of philosophy is no longer that of nature and spirit, but of freedom and necessity. F.W.J.Schelling, 'Philosophical Investigations into the essence of Human Freedom and Related Matters', trans. Pricilla Hayden-Roy, in *Philosophy of German Idealism* (New York: Continuum, 1987) p.117



## Chapter 1

### Encountering the Animal: Life-Cycles

Something in the world forces us to think. This something is an object not of recognition but of a fundamental *encounter*.<sup>19</sup>

Gilles Deleuze

We are always the ones who first take up into the unconcealed such “looking” and who, on our own, interpret the way animals “watch” us as a looking. On the other hand, where man only experiences being and the unconcealed sketchily, the animal’s “look” can concentrate in itself a special power of encounter.<sup>20</sup>

Martin Heidegger

How do we encounter living beings today? Is it otherwise than in previous decades? There is some consensus that our relation to living nature has changed significantly over the centuries. Clear indications of these changes are to be found in the ways that living beings are gathered, caught, cultivated and produced, for food and other essential means

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<sup>19</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. by Paul Patton, Continuum Edition 2004 (London: Continuum, 2004) p.176

<sup>20</sup> Parmenides p.107/159

of life. A more recent development, although one which may have historical roots going back just as far, is an encounter with living nature that does not stem primarily from a need or desire to put it to work. Environmentalism only began to gather pace as a political movement in the last decade or so of Martin Heidegger's life, but it certainly had political and philosophical forebears. Since then Heidegger's work has been taken up, although not without a great deal of mistrust and even foreboding, as a body of thought that belongs to this incubation period. I will argue throughout this thesis that Heidegger does indeed have a great deal to contribute to our understanding of how we encounter living nature today and how that encounter does not and could never take place in an isolated moment, since the moment of encounter is necessarily historically informed.

Yet by posing this question, the question of our encounter with living nature, have we not as philosophers already decided the very point in question? Have we not, on the one hand, decided who we are, those would do the encountering? Have we not, on the other hand, posited the object of encounter? Living nature, or 'the animal,'<sup>21</sup> is posited as a

21 In this chapter I will use the two terms virtually interchangeably. The justification for this should become clear during the course of the argument. If Heidegger were to posit any essential distinction between animal and plant life (or indeed any of the five kingdoms generally recognised today), which he never seems to do, then he could not do so on the Aristotelian basis of the kinds of abilities possessed by each. Neither does he follow the more plausible route pursued by Jakob von Uexküll and Hans Jonas of positing a different environmental relation for each, either in terms of a difference in kind as the former does or a difference in degree of mediation as the later. It is interesting to note that in the first part of *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics* when Heidegger is discussing the inadequacy of the concept of consciousness to account for different modes of 'being-away' he touches on the problem which will become central to the second part of the course, which he calls the question of the structure of being of stone, plant, animal and man. (FCM p.62/93-94) In the second part of the course this fourfold problem is reduced to the famous threefold problem of stone, animal and man. It

background thesis and even if we do not already recognise it for all that it is, we assume that we know what we are talking about here. This criticism of Heidegger's thinking of animality was made powerfully and influentially by Jacques Derrida:

Can one not say, then, that the whole deconstruction of ontology, as it is begun in *Sein und Zeit* and insofar as it unseats, as it were, the Cartesian-Hegelian *spiritus* in the existential analytic, is here threatened in its order, its implementation, its conceptual apparatus, by what is called, so obscurely still, the animal? Compromised, rather, by a *thesis* on animality which presupposes- this is the irreducible and I believe dogmatic hypothesis of the thesis- that there is one thing, one domain, one homogeneous type of entity, which is called animality *in general*, for which any example would do the job.<sup>22</sup>

In this chapter I will argue that Derrida is absolutely right to suggest that an encounter with animality will threaten the 'order', if there ever was such a thing, of the conceptual apparatus in *Being and Time*. Such a threat is acknowledged and developed by

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seems likely that Heidegger intends ultimately to include plant life in his thinking of 'the animal' from statements such as the following: 'Then again, we can only determine the animality of the animal if we are clear about what constitutes the *living character of a living being*, as distinct from the non-living being which does not have the possibility of dying.' (FCM p.179/265) and later, 'Yet this means that we must take up the task of defining the essence of the living being, *of characterising the essence of life*, if only *with particular reference to the animal*.' (FCM p.212/310) The justification for this 'particular reference' is not made clear and one might certainly find some unacknowledged significance which it has for the characterisation of life as a whole.

22 Jacques Derrida, *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question*, trans. Geoffery Bennington and Rachel Bowlby (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989) p.57



Heidegger himself in texts both prior to and after the publication of *Being and Time* and even in that text itself. However, the suggestion that this encounter prompts a falling back into pre-deconstructive ontology cannot be made good. Rather, it is precisely this encounter with animality which prevents deconstructive ontology from falling into anything like a conceptual apparatus or programme which could simply be implemented when it comes to the specific requirements of any regional ontology, including the realm of living nature.

## **§2 Two Types of Encounter and the Circle of Encountering**

How, then, do we encounter the animal today? There are two types of encounter which are of particular prominence. They are by no means novel, although they are subject to changing needs, concerns and conditions of understanding. Neither are they mutually exclusive nor generally well defined possibilities. They are, nevertheless, still indicative of a tension which is irreducible in any encounter with animals and living nature as a whole. It is only by attempting to understand the fundamental torsion of which these two types of encounter are symptomatic that we can begin to understand both its manifestations in our familiar encounters with animals and think through possible transformations of those encounters.

Firstly, animality is investigated in scientific inquiry. The scientific encounter with animality is by no means restricted to biological research 'proper'. Biology itself often seems caught in a tension between the dominant power of bio-chemistry and evolutionary theory's bearing upon history and society, which has turned it towards the historical sciences. Defending the proper region of beings to be investigated by any



particular scientific discipline has become less and less meaningful. All of these scientific investigations are supposed to coax the animal to show itself, if not in itself, then at least in some way that is appropriate. Anthropomorphism is the incessant enemy of all scientific encounter with animality, whether approached from the side of the historical or natural sciences. Science is thus already caught in the tension between the knowledge that it must articulate its encounter with the animal, that it 'uses' the animal in more than the most obvious sense, yet wishes to make that articulation as appropriate to the animal itself as possible. This leads to a problem: how can we encounter the animal on its own terms when on the whole we think of animals as lacking terms in which they can understand themselves? The only safeguard that seems to come to hand is a frequently disingenuous attempt to avoid 'reading in' our own concerns, which more often than not involves nothing more than sticking to a set of pre-prescribed and dogmatically held terms laid down for properly scientific investigation.

Secondly, there is still today and perhaps more prevalent than ever, the 'romantic' encounter with living nature. This is often seen as nothing more than an encounter which forsakes the scientific attempt to guard itself against 'reading in' our own terms. Taken further, it is a deliberate refusal of the safeguarding measures which scientific investigations prize. It allows for a 'personal' encounter with the animal. Yet it is precisely here, where we hope to open ourselves to other possibilities that we find, as science always feared, everywhere only ourselves in the animal and the animal in ourselves. A great deal of popular interest in animals revolves around this mutual mirroring. Every aspect of our own behaviour is supposed to be legitimated and explained when we come across it elsewhere in the animal kingdom, whilst those animals which should be most unfathomable to us are suddenly brought into a

comfortable familiarity with an analogy to our own building, herding, tool using or mating behaviour. Such two-way comparisons, which are somehow supposed to give us instant orientation and insight no matter which way round they are presented to us, remain strangely unsatisfying. The unfathomable mystery of nature, which romanticism hopes to protect from the penetrative grasp of science, reverts immediately into the most banal familiarity. In the end, instead of grounding an understanding of the strange upon the familiar, such analogies make everything equally strange and familiar and tell us nothing about ourselves or the animal.

Ecological political theory and environmental philosophy is also caught in the tension between these two types of encounter. The literature is pervaded by the distinction between 'anthropocentric' and 'ecocentric' approaches. The reason that I have chosen not to follow this nomenclature but to term these two poles of the contemporary encounter with living nature 'scientific' and 'romantic' is to bring out the fact that what is at stake here is a tension that informs our everyday lives and is only mirrored in these theoretical debates. Furthermore, it becomes easier to see from this broader perspective that they are not mutually exclusive experiences, but rather that they mutually implicate one another.

This can be demonstrated in a preliminary way when we note that even as scientific encounter strives for objectivity, it must at the very least declare an interest in the region of beings which it identifies as its area of concern. The romantic encounter, meanwhile, apparently gives free reign to subjectivity and feeling, only to discover that it has left the encounter altogether to endlessly revel in the repeating patterns of its own familiar sentiment. Yet each of these popularly conceived scenarios easily reverses or flips over

into its opposite upon closer inspection. It was Kant who saw that the scientific notion of objectivity could be secured only by grounding the conditions of objecthood in the subject. On the other hand, in the *Critique of Judgement*, it was Kant too who saw that the feelings aroused by nature, of pleasure at indeterminability (beauty) and fear and awe at unfathomable scale (sublimity), arise because nature escapes and remains beyond the conditions of objecthood, that is, it escapes the conceptual nets and snares of the subject. This inspired a whole generation of romantic philosophy of nature, which far from being a pure sentimentalism that reduces our relation with nature to what we feel about it, has its core in the idea that nature fundamentally escapes the subject and that it is this that affects the subject so greatly.<sup>23</sup>

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23 Merleau-Ponty discusses various conceptions of nature similar to those that I am discussing here in his first lecture course on 'Nature' from the Collège de France 1956-1957. He contrasts the 'humanist' conception of nature beginning with Kant to the 'romantic' conception initiated by Schelling. He then goes on to discuss the relation of modern science to nature. That science, he claims, is able to critically take up its own ontology and he argues that Heidegger is wrong to suggest that no science is able to do so. As an organised body of experience it also forms a crucial inroad for our thinking of nature, which then becomes the basis for Merleau-Ponty's thinking of animality in his second lecture course and of the human body in his third course. It would be an important and illuminating study to compare these courses to Heidegger's *Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, especially considering that both thinkers are grappling with the relation of philosophy to natural science and the close proximity of the examples that each takes up. However, it seems to me that the linear presentation of Merleau-Ponty's exposition, moving towards the human body from the nature of space and time does harbour the danger, if not of a teleology, then of of a one way movement of thought which undermines some of his best insights. This is, I hope to show, one of the things which Heidegger tries to avoid in his circling around the problem of animality. See, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Nature: Course Notes from the Collège de France*, trans. Robert Vallier (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2003)



So scientific investigation and romantic encounter are not mutually exclusive. On the contrary, they constantly pervade and threaten one another. They are each in themselves pervaded by an inner tension which is only symbolised in their antagonism towards one another. This tension resolves itself into a circularity in which every attempt we make to open ourselves to the alterity of the animal and encounter it on its own terms revolves around into a moment of self-recognition as we recognise our own terms as the terms on which the meeting takes place. We find ourselves circling around the animal, revolving by turns into a scientific and romantic moment, which immediately tumbles around into its opposite. It is precisely this circular movement which Heidegger identifies as the inevitable and inescapable movement of any encounter with the animal.

In his 1929/30 lecture course *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics* Heidegger struggles to maintain a sense of this encounter, rather than to overcome it. At the beginning of the second part of the lecture course he explicitly directs our attention towards this circular movement on two separate occasions. In §43 it arises from the posing of two fundamental difficulties to be faced in an exposition of world that takes its lead from a phenomenology of animality: '1. *What* are we to determine the essence of life in general *as*? 2. *How* are living beings as such- the animality of the animal and the plant-character of the plant- originally *accessible*?' (FCM, 179/266) At first this appears to be a familiar difficulty. How are we to allow our methodology to be directed by the character of the beings which are to be investigated, when the methodology is required in order to have any access to those beings in the first place? This variety of hermeneutic circle is to be found in any investigation, although we shall see that Heidegger assigns a particular significance to it in this instance. Once again in §45, after he has put forward the guiding thesis that the animal is 'poor in world', Heidegger

pauses to consider how any such proposition could be justified: 'Here I merely wish to point out the peculiar character of the proposition in question and the manner in which ordinary understanding approaches such propositions. We must take them from the relevant science (here zoology) and, at the same time, we try to use them to first secure a specific domain for the science in question and thus to secure its possibility as a science. Thus it is that we find ourselves moving in a *circle*.' (FCM, 187/276) Far from simply reinforcing the traditional view of philosophy of science, in which philosophy can conceptually ground scientific investigation, Heidegger here points out one of the inherent difficulties with proposing such a task for philosophy. If philosophy were to attempt anything like a grounding of the investigations of zoology it would have to take its lead from zoology as to the methods and object of that science, and thus not simply posit the existence of such a science, but engage with the actual content of zoological research, which presupposes that the research is underway prior to its conceptual foundation. On the other hand, were philosophy to seek some kind of verification for its own propositions in the sciences it would find itself moving in the exactly the same circle in the other direction. We cannot remove ourselves from this circularity if we wish to maintain the possibility of encounter with animality, although Heidegger imagines the response that such a suggestion will receive from those unwilling to entertain any circularity in thought: 'But going around in circles gets us nowhere. Above all, it makes us feel dizzy, and dizziness is something uncanny. We feel as though we are suspended in the Nothing. Therefore there must be no such circling and thus no circle in philosophy!' (FCM, 180/266-7)

Yet the way in which we are to maintain ourselves in this circular movement of thought is not indeterminate. The circle must not only be maintained but maintained in a specific

manner. Hermeneutics has perhaps taught us to put up with a certain amount of dizziness. We are willing to maintain ourselves in the circle in the hope that its centrifugal force will expand the horizon of our understanding. The force of Heidegger's circling movement, on the other hand, is quite the opposite: 'The only thing that ordinary understanding can see in this circling motion is the movement around the periphery which always returns to its original point of departure on the periphery. Thus it misses the decisive issue here, which is an insight into the *centre* of the circle as such, an insight made possible in such a circling movement and in this alone. For the centre only manifests itself as such as we circle around it.' (FCM, 180/267) The importance of this view towards the centre is reiterated some pages later: 'The essential feature of the circular movement of philosophy does not lie in running around the periphery and returning to the point of departure. It lies in that view of the centre that this circular course alone can provide. The centre, that is, the middle and the ground, reveals itself as such only in and for the movement that circles it.' (FCM, 187/276) The centripetal force that philosophy generates turns our view towards the centre, which in this case is the place of encounter with the animal. Although it is the middle and the ground, it is by no means a solid ground upon which we can anchor ourselves before the encounter. If the movement of thought desists, then there is no longer any centre and no place of encounter itself takes place. The centre is a place already charged with that tension that is the source of the ambiguity of ordinary understanding and the various contemporary encounters with animality. It is only by moving in this circle, but with a view to the centre, that we can hope to transform our everyday understanding of animality. That would by no means dispel the ambiguity, but it might allow it to manifest itself in ways which are not violently expressed and ultimately repressed by attempts to anchor our animal encounters in a particular moment or segment of the circle. Any attempt at



transformation which does not first catch sight of the centre is liable to fall into just such a logic of repression. If we form the desire to find solid ground and refuse the movement of life cycles, then rather than enabling its transformation we are liable to destroy the encounter altogether. Furthermore, if we were to dialectically overcome the tension that led to the circular movement in the first place, then the centre of encounter would disappear altogether. Heidegger expresses his opposition to the overcoming of circularity and ambiguity in philosophy in the strongest terms, suggesting that, 'All dialectic in philosophy is only the expression of an embarrassment.' (FCM, 187/276)

However, for Heidegger himself by the time of the lecture course of 1929/30, Dasein's relation to the animal finds itself in a widely recognised indeterminacy, the source of which it has not been easy to identify. Dasein's encounters with beings in general are divided into two prevailing types: encounters with 'intra-worldly' beings and encounters with other Dasein. In the *Basic Problems of Phenomenology* Heidegger states this with particular clarity: 'Because being-in-the-world belongs to the basic constitution of Dasein, the existent Dasein is essentially *being-with* (*Mitsein*) others and *being-among* (*Seinbei*) intra-worldly beings.'<sup>24</sup> *Being and Time* had already left us with the difficulty of

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<sup>24</sup> *The Basic Problem of Phenomenology*, trans. Albert Hofstadter. Indiana University Press, 1982) p.

278. Interestingly, at the very beginning of the Twenties, Heidegger held a lecture course in Freiburg with an almost identical title (GA 58 *Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie* 1919/20), in which he points us towards a *threefold* structure of 'factual life', what will later become the analytic of Dasein. There factual life is divided into Self-world (*Selbstwelt*), With-world (*Mitwelt*) and Environing-world (*Umwelt*) (GA 58, §10). During the course of the Twenties this structure is simultaneously reduced and given greater complexity. Self-world, a structure which is in danger of reverting back to a transcendental ego, becomes co-extensive with With-world and Surrounding-world, since Dasein's being is being-in-the-world. The being which is 'in each case mine' only comes across something like a self through specific modifications of its With-world and Surrounding-world. With these

locating a place for animality in its analytic of Dasein. Animals certainly are encountered as ready-to-hand 'equipment'. Animals are bred and raised as part of an equipmental totality. Yet animals also give us a decisive argument against any reading of 'equipmentality' which would understand this environing world as the result of purely human productivity or as advocating a pragmatist ontology: 'Animals also occur within the world without having been raised at all; and, in a way, these entities still produce themselves even when they have been raised. So in the environment certain entities become accessible which are always ready-to-hand, but which, in themselves, do not need to be produced.' (BT, 100/70) So animals and living nature refer us back to the 'double source' of all equipment which Aristotle already recognised, that all equipment in a way produces itself, is 'natural' and may also be produced artificially. What concerned Heidegger here was that an appreciation of either source is lost when nature is understood as pure presence-at-hand. Furthermore, we only encounter the 'production of nature' through an appreciation of equipmentality. So the problem of the self-productivity of nature is to some extent covered over by and at the same time first made accessible through the analysis of environment as equipmental totality. Hence the equipmental totality of our everyday environment hints at a nature which it cannot fully disclose, a nature which, "stirs and strives", which assails us and enthrals us as landscape." Yet we should be particularly careful when it comes characterising this further sense of nature: 'Here, however, "Nature" is not to be understood as that which is just present-at-hand, nor as the *power of Nature (Naturmacht)*.' (BT, 100/70) It remains, however, less than entirely clear how it is to be understood. By emphasising that access to nature is gained through an insight into equipmentality, Heidegger blocks a view to what will later become of greatest importance to him in thinking living nature,

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'modifications' come all the complexities which are worked through in *Being and Time* and lecture courses of the later Twenties.

the 'power' of nature, or rather the potentialities specific to living nature, which will be our topic in chapter 2.<sup>25</sup>

On the other hand, there are certain indications even in *Being and Time* that another possibility for encountering the animal remains, an encounter which is perhaps closer to being-with than being-amongst. Certainly there is no suggestion that the animal could ever have the structure of Dasein. Yet any ontology of 'mere life' requires first the fundamental analytic of Dasein. It is, he claims, a 'privative' ontology. In *Being and Time* the thought of a privative ontology of life is brought into play at two key moments. Firstly, where Heidegger distinguishes the analytic of Dasein from 'Anthropology, Psychology and Biology': 'The ontology of life is accomplished only by way of a privative interpretation; it determines what must be the case if there is to be anything like mere life (*Nur-noch-leben*). Life is not a mere Being-present-at-hand, nor is it Dasein. In turn, Dasein is never to be defined ontologically by defining it as life (in an ontologically indeterminate manner) plus something else.' (BT, 75/50). Then later, when Heidegger wants to distinguish his investigation of the 'being-in' of 'being-in-the-

<sup>25</sup> An important note in the essay *On the Essence of Ground* (PM p.370 note 59, WM p. 155, note 55), refers to the fact that 'nature is apparently missing' in the analytic of Dasein. Here Heidegger hints at the possibility of developing an understanding of nature 'in a more originary sense' than that which predominates in natural science and that which is discovered in the analysis of equipmentality. Heidegger even goes so far as to explain that this absence in *Being and Time* is, 'due to the fact that nature does not let itself be encountered either within the sphere of the environing-world, nor in general as something *towards which we comport ourselves*.' The encounter with an originary nature as that which we are *in the midst of* is precisely the encounter which Heidegger hopes to initiate in *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*. This goes a long way towards explaining the absence of any substantive analysis of the environing-world in that text, something which had formed the core of almost all Heidegger's philosophical writings in the preceding decade. Dasein now finds itself *in the midst of* nature, rather than being-amongst intraworldly beings.



world' from the ontologically indeterminate notion of environment current in biology: 'Yet, even as an *a priori* condition for the objects which biology takes for its theme, this structure itself can be explained philosophically only if it has been conceived beforehand as a structure of Dasein. Only in terms of an orientation towards the ontological structure thus conceived can 'life' as a state of Being defined *a priori*, and this must be done only in a privative manner.' (BT, 84-85/58)<sup>26</sup> Life is not Dasein nor can Dasein be analysed in terms of life, but life may appear within the analysis of the structure of Dasein. What is at issue, however, is *which* structure of Dasein gives us insight into our encounter with living nature. Is it the being-amongst, whether present-at-hand or ready-to-hand, or is it something like a being-with, if not exactly the being-with which we share with other Dasein?

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26 Macquarrie and Robinson add the interpretive note: 'The point is that in order to understand life merely *as such*, we must make abstraction from the fuller life of Dasein.' Giorgio Agamben also finds a 'metaphysical play of presupposition and reference, privation and supplement, between animal and man' in *Being and Time*, see, *The Open: Man and Animal*, trans. by Kevin Attell (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004) p.50. Yet it seems strange that a text which insists so strongly that we can learn nothing about Dasein by interpreting it as an amalgam of mere life with an additional supplement should then suggest that we can learn something of mere life by disassembling just such an amalgam. In the 1939 lectures *Zur Auslegung von Nietzsches II. Unzeitgemässer Betrachtung* Heidegger writes concerning this passage: "'Being and Time" (p.58) said: The determination of the being of life- the gathered joining (*Gefüge*) of this kind of being can be made, "only by way of privation" (From out of the interpretation of Da-sein). Some have grossly misunderstood this sentence and claim that it is attempting to say: Life is only a 'privation' of Da-sein, i.e. roughly: the animal is a lacking and lower level man! No, the animal is never man, but rather 'animal'. But the question concerns the possibility of determining the animality of the animal *through man (durch den Menschen)!*" (GA 46, p.243) It is exactly this problem of concerning ourselves with the animality of the animal itself, yet not being able to do so by turning away from our own being, which forms the central problem addressed by the 'privative ontology' of *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*.



We can make this problem of encountering animality a little more precise and avoid the temptation to turn the structures of Dasein which Heidegger describes in *Being and Time* into immutable categories, if we consider precisely what is involved in the idea of 'encounter'. The word itself seems to contain within it a trace of the tension which I am trying to elaborate. To en-counter is to enter in or be drawn into a meeting, but a meeting which at one and the same time offers some counter or resistance. We are not given open access, but we are drawn in enough to feel the weight of the counter. In German the countering is very clear in the word which Heidegger often employs for encounter, *Begegnis*. This could be contrasted to the term which in *Being and Time* describes the way that Dasein is drawn into its intra-worldly care, involvement or *Bewandtnis*. Countering and involvement form a pair which make up the irreducible tension of encounter. Of course, in *Being and Time* Heidegger offers a well known criticism of Max Scheler's argument that our primary engagement with the world is in coming up against it as *resistance*. In order to experience the world as something which resists me, something must already have been made manifest which I am 'out for': '*The experiencing of resistance- that is, the discovery of what is resistant to one's endeavours- is possible ontologically only by reason of the disclosedness of world.*' (BT, 253/210) There is certainly a sense, as we shall see, in which the encounter with animality two years later will bring the phenomenon of resistance to the fore once again.<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless, it will remain a *phenomenon*, so that the ontological value of

<sup>27</sup> For two readings which suggest that Heidegger's criticism of Scheler ultimately proves to be too partial, see. Kenneth W. Stickers, 'Value as Ontological Difference' and Philip Blosser, 'Scheler's Theory of Values Reconsidered', both in *Phenomenology of Values and Valuing*, (The Hague: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1997). Frank Schalow argues that Scheler's point arises again as a implicit critique of the analysis of *Being and Time* with Heidegger's introduction of the concept of earth in the following decade. Frank Schalow, *The Incarnality of Being: The Earth, Animal, and the Body in*

resistance, if it is to gain any further significance will have to be incorporated into the phenomenality of the world and removed from the ontology of will which formed the context within which Heidegger developed his critique; something that was already begun in *Being and Time* by the analysis of truth as disclosedness. Ultimately, however, it will not be a question of deciding whether it is Scheler or Heidegger who was correct with regards the primordially of resistance in our encounter with the world. Rather, I would suggest, the controversy itself can be seen as another symptom of the primordial tension in encounter. When it comes to our encounters with living nature it is neither a sheer resistance nor an open invitation that confronts us. Rather, we are drawn into a circle of invitation and resistance, which will have different points of departure and emphasis depending upon the creatures encountered and the situation in which they are encountered.

In the context of the anomaly which animal encounters seem to present for Heidegger's understanding of intra-worldly involvement, much attention has been paid to the discussion of being-towards-death in *Being and Time*. Here Heidegger famously denies the potential of an authentic relation to death and even an inauthentic 'demise' or abdication of life (*Ableben*) to the animal. The animal can only 'perish' or come to an end (*verenden*). (BT, 291/247)<sup>28</sup> Somewhat less attention has been paid to the

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*Heidegger's Thought* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006) p.93. Although this may certainly be the case for the description of earth in 'The Origin of the Work of Art', I do not think it remains the case once earth is given its place as one of the four 'world regions'. It is precisely the encounter with animality which shows there to be what in the language of *Being and Time* would be called an equi-primordially between resistance and involvement.

28 In *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics* Heidegger still insists that: 'The touchstone for the appropriateness and originary character of every question concerning the essence of life lies in whether or not this question has adequately grasped the problem of death and whether or not it is able



subsequent point at which Heidegger re-opens the whole question of the kind of relation the animal has to the world and thus the kind of encounter which Dasein could have with the animal up for future examination: 'It remains a problem in itself to define ontologically the way in which the senses can be *stimulated* or *touched* in something that merely has life, and how and where the Being of animals, for instance, is constituted by some kind of 'time'.' (BT, 396/346) He is in the process of interpreting the fundamental constitution of Dasein, Care, in terms of temporality. If Heidegger will always insist that it is 'death as death' that marks out Dasein from animals, there may be another temporality, that pertaining to living nature, which remains an enigma to us precisely because our temporalising is always marked by death in this way.

This is the situation when Heidegger begins his phenomenology of living nature in *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*. Animals and perhaps living nature in general

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to take it up into its own question concerning the essence of life in the correct way, and vice versa.' (FCM p.266/387) David Farrell Krell has brought to our attention just how thoroughly Heidegger's thought concerning the essence of life revolves around this point and he has placed in question some of the distinctions which Heidegger wants to maintain here. See, *Daimon Life: Heidegger and Life-Philosophy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992) esp. pp.84-99. Yet since Heidegger's thinking of death is never the absence of life, but revolves around the working of a certain negativity within life, he goes on to add the following qualification to the touchstone of death: 'Of course it would be just as foolish to try to explain life from death as it would be to try to explain death from life. Nevertheless, on the basis of its apparent negativity as the annihilation of life, death does possess the methodological function of revealing the apparent positivity in the problem of life.' (FCM p.266/387) Death is then linked explicitly to the problem of the 'motility of life'. I will therefore leave this question until chapter 2, where we will take up the potentiality specific to living nature and with that the form of negativity which belongs to that potentiality. In so doing we will be able to address Krell's objections, which are informed by a 'life-philosophy' which emphasises the positivity of the plenum of life.



are caught between the being of intra-worldly beings and the being of others. It may seem that Heidegger prejudices the outcome of this encounter by insisting on an confrontation with zoological accounts of animality. He explicitly insists that here he will restrict himself to the 'scientific and metaphysical' mode of truth. (FCM, 204/300) However, it is significant that Heidegger does not fall back on the position which he had always maintained until then, that living nature can only be encountered as part of a referential totality or within an equipmental context. Nevertheless, he does still understand this as an encounter with a specific kind of intra-worldly being. At the same time this encounter is kept in tension with a sense of the animal as a being which almost falls outside of the world, or at least hovers at the edges of our understanding. The animal too describes a cyclical path around the place of encounter as a being which, if it does not itself articulate the world, is articulated by it.

However, the tension does not appear first of all in this form. It appears in the attempt to do justice to the animal in its alterity whilst admitting the necessity of some articulation of that alterity. So we find, situated at either end of Heidegger's analysis of the essence of animality these two statements, which appear to contradict one another, but which in fact formulate two moments of the circular movement which we will attempt to pursue:

What is lacking in all this is insight into the necessary task of securing above all else *the essential nature of life in and of itself* and a resolute attempt to accomplish this.

(FCM, 192)

For we ourselves have also been in view all the time, whether we wanted to be or not, although not in the form of some arbitrary and contingent self-observation or in the form of some traditional definition of man.

(FCM, 272)

Before we attempt to trace this circle ourselves and perhaps catch a glimpse of the centre from a somewhat different angle to Heidegger, I want to make it clear that what he has in view here is not simply of great importance for understanding how he viewed the possibilities of dialogue between biology and philosophy at this pivotal point in his career. When he restricts himself to the 'scientific and metaphysical' mode of truth, this is not a limitation to theoretical encounter in opposition to our practical dealings with animals. To show clearly that what is at stake here is also our political and ethical encounters with living nature, I will begin by examining two contemporary readings of Heidegger's encounter with animality by Jacques Derrida and Giorgio Agamben. In both of these readings the question of encounter becomes inseparable from its techno-scientific articulation. Furthermore, in both cases the practical encounter with animality is held in a tension between the ethical and political. That distinction has nothing to do with a division of the private and public spheres. It is a distinction between that part of our encounter with animality which attempts to do justice to the alterity of the animal and that part which understands the necessity of articulating alterity. It is in this tension that the ambiguity of the place of encounter manifests itself in both these readings, apparently so different in approach. This should not project us out of Heidegger's sphere of concern, but will hopefully aid us to reinsert ourselves there on our own

trajectory and with a view to catching our own glimpse of the centre, thus perhaps enabling us to initiate a transformation of our own relation to living nature. For the 'centre' in question is not a stable and localisable source of value. It is only generated by the circling around one another of man and animal and disappears from view when colonised by either, as in the case in both 'anthropocentric' social environmentalism and 'ecocentric' ecologism. Heidegger provides us with a '*non-centred*' environmentalism, but one in which centres of meaning and value are generated as man and animal circle around and encircle one another.<sup>29</sup>

### §3 Animal Alterity and its Articulation

We have found ourselves caught in a tension between the force of the animal's own claim upon us and our own inevitable articulation of the animal's being. I have claimed that in *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics* Heidegger will lead us towards the root of this everyday tension, that is, the essential character of Dasein's encounter with living nature. Before I attempt to make good that claim I want to explore two ways in which the tension in question has manifested itself in recent readings of Heidegger's account of animality. The interpretations in question are those of Giorgio Agamben in his essay *The Open: Man and Animal* and Jacques Derrida in his lecture entitled *The Animal That Therefore I Am (More to Follow)*. These two readings take very different paths towards Heidegger's encounter with animality. However, upon closer examination

<sup>29</sup> For an extremely illuminating account of the development of *noncentred* ecological thought by various French theorists eliding the distinction between 'anthropocentric' and 'ecocentric' ecology which dominates the English-speaking literature see, Kerry H. Whiteside, *Divided Natures: French Contributions to Political Ecology*, (Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press, 2002). This is perhaps not surprising, I would suggest, given the unprecedented engagement with Heidegger's thought in post-war France, although Whiteside does not mention this connection.



I think that each reading can be seen to approach the issue from a point which requires supplement from the other.

Agamben's interest in the problem of animality is clearly motivated by his broader biopolitical concerns. In *The Open* he provides us with a condensed history of the theological, metaphysical, political and biological attempts to separate out human life from animal life. He argues that these separations and the whole economy of relations between man and animal depend upon a distinction which is maintained within ourselves between our humanity and animality. The *locus classicus* for the establishment of this caesura can be found in Aristotle's *De Anima*, in which Aristotle separates out the different faculties of the soul and nutritive life becomes the faculty to be found in all living beings. It is nevertheless still within the human soul that the distinctions between nutritive life and perceptive life and perceptive life and life bearing *logos* is first made. It is only then that we turn to plant life and see it as bearing the nutritive but not perceptive or logical faculties. Far more than serving as a basic concept for botany (where incidentally recent work has come more and more to appreciate the perceptive faculties of plants), we can see the functioning of the concept of nutritive or vegetative life as applied to man, above all in medical and political science. Thus, Agamben claims, when it comes to the encounter of man and animal it is always first of all and primarily the encounter with the animal 'in us' which is at issue and which informs all other encounters with other living beings.

What Agamben fails to do is adequately distinguish two senses of the 'in us' when we say that our encounter with animality is always an encounter with the animality 'in us'. He argues that any encounter with other animals is always articulated by our

understanding of our own being in part animal. For Heidegger too there is an important and undeniable sense in which any encounter with the animal would have to be 'in us'. Yet it does not necessarily result from processes which lead to a split 'within ourselves,' between our own humanity and animality. The sense in which any encounter with the animal must be 'in us' is not a function of our own supposed animality. Rather, it stems from the claim that any encounter of Dasein's will take the form of an 'existential', one of the structures that make up the various ways that Dasein is in the world. An encounter must take place 'in us,' to the extent we are the place, or at least intrinsically bound up with the place, the *Da*, which allows for encounters. But the phrase 'in us' should not mislead us into thinking that any encounter for Heidegger would remain anthropocentric, in the sense that it would remain sealed within a human 'point of view'.

In *The Fundamental Concepts of Aristotelian Philosophy*, a lecture course delivered in the summer semester of 1924, Heidegger attempts to draw out of Aristotle's *De Anima* a different sense of the 'in us' which determines our encounter with the animal. In that course the term 'being-in-the-world' was not yet used exclusively to describe the way Dasein inhabits a world, but is also used to describe animal life. Yet there is already an important sense in which the animal as being-in-the-world can only be thought 'in us':

When one follows the distinction through then one must remember that the particular possibilities of being which the animal has come into, as Aristotle shows in his investigation of the being-character of life 'De anima,' do not simply stand next to those of man, but like all possibilities which the animal has, are in man there along-with (*mit da*), not lying next to one another, but



rather determined by the *ousia* of man, by his way of being in the world...<sup>30</sup>

For Heidegger then, Aristotle does not simply dissect the soul on the operating table of humanity and then take the various dismembered parts as the measure for encounters with living nature. Our own possibilities for encounter determine the possibilities which we see in the animal, but determine them in a kind of *co-determination* which occurs *in* the encounter. It is only in this encounter, which remains determined by our own being that we can release the animal into its own distinctive possibilities, the possibilities which make up its being-in-the-world. Were we to desire the absolute purity of an encounter which has no articulation or is articulated only from the side of the animal, then there would be no encounter at all. We will see that Heidegger's aim in *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics* is still the elaboration of this thought which he draws out from Aristotle's text: to think animality from out of the encounter so that the animal and man do not simply stand next to one another with their similarities and differences. The claim on the part of the animal, the claim of the animal upon us to try to think animality on its own terms becomes all the more pressing precisely at this moment when we are faced with the animal's refusal to provide us with a set of ready-made terms that we can take with us to every encounter.

Heidegger's analysis in this 1924 lecture course, in so far as it remains fixed upon the determination of the particular possibilities of man and especially the *levels* of wakefulness to the *Open (Da)* which are achieved by man and animal, is still caught up in the determination of *levels* of being. Nevertheless, as the passage cited above shows, he begins to free us and animal life from the bonds of this chain of being. Here begins the deconstruction of the Aristotelian encounter with the animal, in which it will no

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30 GA 18 p.53



longer be a matter of laying out the possibilities and capabilities of animals and human beings next to one another and especially not a matter of adding particular sets of capabilities to others to reach a determination of any particular creature. Rather, Heidegger will try to understand what capability means in each case. The first step towards that goal nevertheless involves an admission that any understanding will take place within Dasein, since Dasein is the very openness to the world which allows for understanding. Without an articulation, which does indeed bring with it the threat of imposition, there will be no encounter at all. The deconstruction of our drive to lay out beings for a comparative analysis in terms of *levels* of capability will not be completed in the lecture course of 1924, but that course does prepare an ongoing attempt to think an encounter with the animal which does not function in this manner.

Is it not the case that the deconstruction of the distinctions with which we articulate our separation and relation to animals needs to be brought to bare in the encounters themselves? Does Agamben pay enough attention to the everyday, the unexpected and the unique animal encounters which, whilst certainly shaped by our own bio-political articulations, can only be reshaped and called into question within the encounter? Although he longs for a 'between' which is no longer subject to these articulations, Agamben risks blocking the circular trajectory of encounter and thus making the reshaping of its articulations impossible. I will discuss a particular aspect of this danger in chapters 3 and 4 below. For now, let us turn to a somewhat different reading of the situation.

In *The Animal That Therefore I Am (More to Follow..)* Jacques Derrida describes an encounter in which he is looked at by a cat, looked at and even appealed to, by a cat whilst he stands face to face with it:

If I say “it is a real cat” that sees me naked, it is in order to mark its unsubstitutable singularity. When it responds in its name (whatever *respond* means, and that will be our question), it doesn’t do so as an exemplar of a species called cat, even less so of an animal genus or realm. It is true that I identify it as a male or female cat. But even before this identification, I see it as *this* irreplaceable living being that one day enters my space, enters this place where it can encounter me, see me, even see me naked. Nothing can ever take away from me the certainty that what we have here is an existence that refuses to be conceptualised.<sup>31</sup>

Derrida may steadfastly hold on to this certainly, but it is clear that in order to do so he must constantly fend off conceptualisations. For the refusal of conceptualisation on the part of this singular existence is rarely even noticed, precisely because it is all too easily conceptualised in all of the ways which Derrida alludes to in this passage.

Derrida, interestingly and perhaps surprisingly, tries hard to hold on to this moment of pure encounter, this unsubstitutable singularity which refuses conceptualisation. He does not dismiss such a thought out of hand. But he will not be able to maintain it in its purity. The very nakedness of the encounter betrays itself. This is a bare encounter, a face to face in which I am exposed to the Other in all my vulnerability. Thus Derrida describes an encounter which is supposed to recall the naked ethical encounter of the face-to-face as described by Emmanuel Levinas. Such animal encounters, as is well known, always remained problematic for Levinas himself.<sup>32</sup> Yet Derrida is well aware

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31 ‘The Animal that therefore I am (More to follow)’ in *Animal Philosophy: Ethics and Identity* p.116

32 For attempts to push Levinas to the limit on the issue of an animal encounter see, *The Middle Voice of*

that even in this encounter, where one is apparently divested of all the masks which can seem to be sealed over the face in an encounter with another person, the encounter cannot be utterly bare. His very nakedness articulates his response. He feels an unaccountable shame in the face of the cat's look. Furthermore, a true nakedness would not be felt as such. This nakedness and exposure to the Other is felt as the unveiling of the self which would usually be clothed by all manner of techniques, not least by conceptual apparatus of identification and recognition when faced with an animal. But when Derrida claims that before all of that there is the singularity of an animal which demands a response, one wonders where this priority comes from. The naked encounter, the bare face-to-face, is denied to us in its purity as soon as we recognise it as such.

Derrida begins with something like the pure encounter which Agamben thinks is denied to us by bio-political machinations. Yet this encounter is already masked by a myriad of articulations and it is even articulated *as* bare encounter. So there seems to be a possible, indeed inevitable, movement from the ethics of the encounter to the politics of its articulation and vice versa. For Derrida this movement takes place in an almost emblematic fashion precisely where Levinas was not even sure that any genuine encounter could take place, in an encounter with the animal. Nevertheless, whilst Derrida, like Agamben, is caught up in the movement between the ethics of encounter and politics of articulation, we have to wonder if its impetus can carry us far enough.<sup>33</sup>

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*Ecological Conscience, A Chiasmic Reading of Responsibility in the Neighbourhood of Levinas, Heidegger and Others* (Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1991) pp. 49-67, David Wood, *Thinking after Heidegger* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002) pp.135-152 and *Animal Philosophy: Ethics and Identity*, ed. Matthew Calarco and Peter Atterton (London: Continuum, 2004) pp.47-61

33 This, for example, is David Wood's concern in reading Derrida's encounter with his cat, that the singularity of the encounter will remain just that and will be unable to address the ecological politics which at once articulate that encounter and demand a responsive transformation in that very



If Agamben begins with the machinations that politically articulate an encounter before it has even taken place, Derrida begins with a face to face whose articulation is stunted by his prior certainty that what is truly important in the encounter cannot be conceptualised. Each moves in the direction of the other but fails to turn full circle.

What Heidegger will allow us to see, if we in turn trace his account of animality in *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, is that when we find ourselves caught between these two possibilities we must not attempt to escape by fleeing in one direction or the other. What needs to occur in order for us to arrive at an appropriate comportment to the animal and eventually living nature as a whole is that we are able to trace back this tension to its root in the place of encounter.

Derrida expresses the hope at one point in his meditation that we will come to be able to encounter the animal in a way whereby its lack of language, its lack of its own terms, will not be understood as *privation*.<sup>34</sup> He still seems to hold fast to the idea of a certain unwanted and unnecessary negativity which this concept betrays, an idea which he first expressed in *Of Spirit*. Yet were he to succeed in this desire then he would not transform our relation to the animal but would destroy it altogether. For Heidegger, as I hope now to show, *poverty* is no longer the name of an undue negativity which constantly betrays an allegiance to the hierarchisation of beings. *Poverty* becomes the name for the tensed structure, or rather circular trajectory, of animal encounters.

#### §4 Impoverished Empathy

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articulation. David Wood 'Thinking with Cats' in *Animal Philosophy: Ethics and Identity*, ed. Matthew Calarco and Peter Atterton (London: Continuum, 2004) pp. 129-44

34 Ibid p.126

We can now turn to the 1929/30 lecture course itself and pursue the circular trajectory which we have identified, with an eye towards the place of encounter at the centre of the circle thus described. This 'centre', however, does not form the heart of Heidegger's account but remains on the periphery, in the midst of what appear to be merely methodological concerns.

*i) Comparative Examination and the Problem of Access*

The most striking of these 'methodological' features is Heidegger's claim to be conducting a comparative analysis of the 'worlds' of stone, animal and man. He contrasts this method to two other methods which he had previously employed in order to try to bring to light the phenomenon of world. In 1929, just before he gave this course, he used an historical method in *On the Essence of Ground*, to trace the concept of *kosmos* through *mundus* to 'world'. In *Being and Time* he attempted, 'to provide a preliminary characterisation of the *phenomenon of world* by interpreting the way in which we at first and for the most part move around in our everyday world.' (FCM, 177/262), that is, the analysis of the modes of 'being-amongst' beings which operate in our environing-world. Both of these approaches, the phenomenological analysis of our everyday being-in-the-world and the tracing of the history of concepts which inform that analysis, are familiar to us as complimentary and mutually necessary aspects of Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology of world up until 1929. That is why it comes as something of a surprise that Heidegger now proposes a third path of investigation-'the path of *comparative examination*'.

The idea of a comparative examination as a way of gaining access to the phenomenon of world is surprising primarily because it seems to assume that the world is already manifest to us. Does a comparative examination not require that various varieties of world, or ways of having world, can be laid out before us for inspection? Is this not precisely the kind of dissection and classification of worldhood which I have just claimed Heidegger tries to deconstruct? The previously employed historical method was perhaps comparative in some sense, but Heidegger's understanding of historicity makes it clear from the start that the concepts of world so compared did not simply succeed one another, but rather interpenetrate, whilst each brings to the fore and covers over different aspects of the *problem* of world which Heidegger was attempting to expose. The comparative examination now being proposed, on the other hand, seems to invite the kind of dogmatic assertions about levels of being which we are trying to avoid. The problem is exacerbated when the 'guiding theses' of the examination are proposed: The stone is worldless; the animal is poor in world; man is world-building. (FCM, 177/263 & 184/272) What could be more arbitrary than to take up these theses, of all the possible theses which could guide a comparative examination? Nevertheless, what this examination will never be is a 'presentation,' a setting out of the three relations to world for point by point comparison.

My claim will be that the thesis of *world-poverty* cannot in the end be a thesis about the animal 'in itself'. That is because the animal is not itself when considered outside of its encounters. That is not an epistemological thesis which claims that we cannot know what the animal in itself is, but an ontological thesis which claims that the very being of the animal is informed by its encounter with Dasein. This is not to say that 'before' or 'outside' of these encounters the being of the animal is marked by a lack that is only



filled by its encounter with man. If the being of the animal is marked by privation of some kind then it is to be found in this encounter with Dasein. The thesis of world-poverty concerns the encounter between man and animal, beings with fundamentally different modes of encounter. That is what gives this particular encounter its uncanny quality. For which mode is to prevail so that one would know whether to say 'I encounter the animal' or 'The animal encounters me'? Heidegger is not always completely clear about this, frequently claiming that the thesis of 'world-poverty' is a determination of the animality of the animal. This must be taken as a defence against any reading which would understand 'world-poverty' as 'mere projection,' as having nothing to do with the animal 'itself', but only our subjective view of the situation. The 'thesis' certainly does say something about the animal, but it does so only as an articulation of the encounter.

The question now becomes one of *access*. Rather than simply assuming that a comparative examination is possible Heidegger witnesses the transformation of the chosen method into an apparently uncircumventable problem. We must already approach the substantive question of what kind of being belongs to the animal, the stone and the human being as we raise the methodological question of whether we can transpose ourselves into those other beings. This is largely why Heidegger claims that these are not strictly speaking methodological questions at all, since that designation assumes a separation of methodological and substantive considerations. Although every methodological question must be intimately connected with the substantive matter, this is inescapably so in this case, since every *initial* approach already lands us in the middle of the substantive difficulties. That is also true of every philosophical investigation, qua philosophy. Heidegger remarks later that: 'It is a unique characteristic of all

philosophizing in comparison with every scientific orientation that at the moment which proper philosophical knowledge is to emerge, what is decisive is not so much a taking hold of the matter, but appraising the standpoint of the investigation- and that has nothing to do with methodological reflections.’ (FCM, 287/415-416) Nothing to do with methodological reflections because that would already assume the strict division between methodological and substantive investigations, as though philosophy were simply a more elaborate and laborious preliminary to a scientific taking hold of the matter. Philosophy cannot take hold of the matter precisely because its ‘matter’ is the standpoint. We should not let the proposed form of a ‘comparative examination’ distract us from this point. Furthermore, although this is true of all ‘methodological’ reflection, Heidegger claims that, ‘[H]ere this is the case in a quite exceptional sense.’ (FCM, 201/295) An encounter with animality is a philosophical experience *par excellence* and that means that the science of biology presents a unique opportunity to turn science back towards thought. The question of *access* then, takes the form of a set of questions about the possibility of ‘transposition’: ‘Thus when we ask about transposing ourselves, about the possibility of man’s transposing himself into another human being, into an animal, or into a stone, we are simultaneously asking this question as well: what is the kind of being which belongs to these beings insofar as they permit, resist, or possibly forbid as entirely inappropriate any such self-transposition into them in each case?’ (FCM, 201/295-296)

## *ii) Transposition*

The three questions then are as follows: Can we transpose ourselves into the animal? Can we transpose ourselves into the stone? Can we transpose ourselves into another

human being? What is remarkable about Heidegger's response to these questions is that he claims that only the question about the animal actually makes sense *as a question*. The other two questions actually turn out to be intrinsically nonsensical, although for very different reasons in each case. The question of transposition will therefore turn out to be a question unique to our encounter with the animal.

The question concerning the animal makes sense as a question because we do not doubt that animals have dealings with what surrounds them. They carry with them, 'a sphere offering the possibility of transposition.' (FCM, 204/299) Yet, the question does not simply ask whether we can make some kind of sense out of what is being demanded of us here, but whether we can actually carry it through. Whether we can, 'go along with the animal in the way in which it sees and hears, the way in which it seizes its prey and avoids its predators, the way in which it builds its nest and so forth.' (FCM, 204/299) It is not clear that we will be able to do this, but we understand at least to some extent what is being asked of us. On the other hand, if we are asked to transpose ourselves into a stone that makes no sense. We do not say that it is impossible because we are not sure if we can accomplish it or how to go about it. Rather, we say it is impossible because we cannot make any sense of the demand. Or at least this is our *usual* response. In an aside which fundamentally challenges many of the assumptions at work here, Heidegger suggests that it is well within the power of Dasein to 'animate' material things and even technical things. The two principle ways in which this can occur are *myth* and *art*. Furthermore, we should not imagine that these ways of encountering other beings are fantastical illusions as opposed to the reality of the scientific attitude. Myth and art are different kinds of truth. We should not even imagine that these possibilities are exceptional. They are unusual because our 'natural' way of thinking has been



determined by scientific and metaphysical knowledge. Since this is the subject matter of the current investigation, Heidegger proposes to limit himself to these possibilities. This decision, although it can seem strangely artificial, actually forms one of the great strengths of this text. Heidegger works upon human existence as he finds it, determined by scientific and metaphysical knowledge. It is only later that the potential of other 'kinds of truth' will really be explored.

The question as to whether we can transpose ourselves into another human being turns out to be nonsensical for a very different reason. It does not make sense to ask whether we can transpose ourselves into other human beings because our way of existing involves our constantly and always already being 'transposed' in this way. It is clear to us in our everyday existence that others not only have the possibility of having the same comportment towards things, but that we can *share* a comportment without this experience being fragmented in the process. (FCM, 205/300) There is no *problem* here, nothing questionable about the very possibility of such a transposition.

Yet is it not the case that here too, as with the animal, there is a question of whether we can actually carry through the transposition? In fact, these questions remain distinct. We intrinsically assume the *possibility* of transposing ourselves into the animal. But in the case of the other human being we do not even need to assume the possibility because we know that it is one of our essential characteristics: 'Insofar as human beings exist at all, they already find themselves transposed in their existence into other human beings, even if there are factually no other human beings in the vicinity. Consequently the *Da-sein* of man means, not exclusively but amongst other things, being transposed into other human beings.' (FCM, 205/301) Certainly there are difficulties, often severe,

which arise in our being with others. There are also achievements in our relationships, such as when we are able to share perspectives and empathise with the other. There are arguments and blank incomprehension when we are unable to do so. The problem is that we do not realise that these disappointments and achievements take place on the basis of our being transposed into the other, in a state of 'inconspicuous and self-evident going alongside one another.' (FCM, 206/302) Only on the basis of this going alongside are we able to come into conflict with others, to be utterly astounded by them, or even to find them simply unfathomable. It is because the problems and achievements are conspicuous, whilst their basis is so self-evident that it does not show up at all, that we are led to an utterly misleading view of how we exist alongside other human beings and are thus apt to mistake what is at stake in the questions about transposing ourselves onto the animal and the stone.

The problems and achievements of our existence with one another are often understood as problems and achievements of 'empathy'. It is theories of our being with one another which take their cue from empathy that Heidegger blames for some of our most entrenched and pernicious views about how human beings exist and the most persistent pseudo-problems in philosophy: 'Philosophy has reinforced this illusion even further by propounding the dogma that the individual human being exists for him- or herself as an individual and that it is the individual ego with its ego-sphere which is initially and primarily given to itself as what is most certain.' (FCM, 206/302) Theories of empathy, rather than bridging the space between isolated egos, end up digging a deeper trench, because they rely upon this illusory view of how human beings exist with one another for their very sense.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> It is above all Husserl's attempts to understand inter-subjectivity in terms of *Einfühlung* that Heidegger has in mind when voicing these objections.



What particularly concerns Heidegger about empathy when it is thought as a special ability to feel what the other feels is that it cannot do justice to the other, and that, especially in the case of the animal, it will end up being a, 'premature psychological interpretation of the specific manner of being pertaining to the lizard... 'empathetically' projecting our own feelings onto this animal.' (FCM, 197/291) If we 'feel ourselves in' to the place of the other we risk simply displacing them. Nevertheless, perhaps Heidegger is over hasty in rejecting empathy as a way to understand the problem of animality. That haste is based not upon an overall rejection but upon a prior and decisive incorporation and transformation of *pathos* in Heidegger's thought. *Pathos* is so overwhelmingly present in Heidegger's entire understanding of Dasein that no place remains for it as a special ability, such as the 'the ability to empathise'. Dasein is an empathic being through and through.<sup>36</sup> Its ability to be moved and taken along with those beings which it is amongst and those beings that it is with underlies all of its encounters. Yet what marks out Dasein from those beings which are simply subject to affects is an ability to take up its own disposition and to project itself into the enveloping atmosphere of a mood. This does not amount to an emotional voluntarism. Dasein does not simply choose its mood. But neither is it simply subject to its fluctuating disposition. It can take up its disposition and project itself into an attunement which does not simply affect it as an intra-worldly being, but affects the world which its very being is to be in. To enter into such an attunement would be em-pathy in a strict sense.

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36 The development of some of Heidegger's most important designations of the being of Dasein in *Being and Time*, including disposition (*Befindlichkeit*) and attunement (*Stimmung*) from out of the Aristotelian notion of *pathos* is made absolutely clear in *Grundbegriffe der aristotelischen Philosophie* GA 18, esp. §18, pp.20-21 and p. 26.



Is there not then a case for understanding the basis for our animal encounters as something like empathy? Not as a special ability, but as the name of an event which has to take place before an otherwise impossible encounter? Such an event would always remain superfluous in the case of the other human beings because we are always there already with those others. If empathy is a second order phenomenon in the case of our being-with other Dasein, perhaps it is the very ground for encountering the animal. In that case it would be an always uncertain ground, a ground created anew in each encounter. Heidegger will in the end also rely upon a specific kind of affect when it comes to being amongst living nature. The *pathos* which allows us to enter into the realm of animality is called forth in the word 'poverty'.

### *iii) The Mood of Poverty as Empathy with the Animal*

The first part of *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics* is taken up by an extensive analysis of the fundamental attunement of profound boredom. The awakening of this fundamental attunement is supposed to interrupt our everyday dealings with the world and allow us to catch a glimpse of the world 'as whole.' Yet the awakening of this mood is not confined to the preparatory phase of the investigation, to be used as a kind of 'step up' to the issue at hand. Rather, the mood awakened in the investigation informs all subsequent attempts to catch sight of the phenomenon of world. Heidegger only returns specifically to the attunement of boredom after his discussion of animality, when he comes to discuss the 'world-building' character of man. However, I think it can be shown that within this context the notion of 'poverty' has the primary signification of a 'mood of poverty' and it is on this basis that I argue that a certain kind of empathy plays

the central role in our encounter with animality.

In his comparative investigation Heidegger has put forward the thesis that the animal is 'poor in world'. This does not mean that the animal is of a lower order than man. Animals have capacities which are beyond human beings, as Heidegger illustrates with the examples of the discriminatory capacity of the falcon's eye and the dog's sense of smell. (FCM, 194/286) Furthermore, there is no hierarchy between animals. Every animal is as complete as another. Being 'poor' in this context does not mean to simply lack a particular set of capacities nor to have a lesser degree of any particular capacity. Rather, it is an '*Entbehren*', a 'deprivation,' but also a 'doing without', to get along without. It is helpful to bear this in mind. 'Deprivation' is not the name of sheer lack but of a way in which something becomes lacking and does without. 'Doing without' is a response to this deprivation, *how* one comports oneself in the given situation. It is this double characterisation of the how lack occurs and how it is responded to that Heidegger wants to direct our attention towards:

Such deprivation (*Entbehren*) in turn is possible in different ways depending on *how* whatever is poor is deprived and comports itself to its deprivation, *how* it responds to the deprivation, *how* it takes this deprivation. In short: with regard to *what* such a being is deprived of and above all the *way* in which it is deprived, namely *the way* in which it is *in a mood (zu Mute)-mood of poverty (Ar-mut)*.

(FCM, 195/287)

What is strange about this passage is that Heidegger seems to shift from giving an explanation of what the phrase 'poverty in world' is meant to tell us about the animal's world, to a description of how human beings can respond to deprivation. He is clear that he is now discussing a comportment of Dasein, a 'mood of poverty' which is analogous to a 'mood of melancholy' or a 'mood of humility':

This is meant to indicate that poverty is not merely a characteristic property, but the very way in which man comports and bears himself. *Poverty in this proper sense* of human *existence* is also a kind of deprivation and necessarily so. Yet from such deprivation we can draw our own peculiar power of procuring transparency and inner freedom for Dasein.

(FCM, 195/288)

A power peculiar to whom? A power peculiar to those human beings who comport themselves in a mood of poverty, a power which seems to distinguish us from other beings and empowers our Dasein. Yet that, it seems, is a power of self-distinction which is peculiar to human beings in general. It is strange indeed that in the elucidation of the concept of poverty, which is supposed to characterise the animal as opposed to man, there should be a turn towards this mood of poverty which is a peculiar power of Dasein. Heidegger excuses himself with the claim that we will not be able to understand the function of the term 'poverty' in the expression 'poor in world' through a linguistic analysis, but must turn to the animal itself, bearing in mind what we now know about poverty, that is, that it need not signify a simple quantitative difference, but rather *how* difference is taken up and responded to. Yet the concrete interpretation of the animal's



relation to its environment will not mitigate the problem which arises here as Heidegger hopes. If anything the problem of how the animal's 'poverty in world' relates to Dasein's 'mood of poverty' becomes even more obscure following the investigation of animal environments which follows.

Paragraph 63, which follows the analysis of the animal's environment which we will take up in the next section, is entitled 'An objection raised by ourselves to the thesis concerning the not-having of world as deprivation and poverty of the animal. Removing the force of the objection.' The quite reasonable objection which Heidegger raises against his own approach is that once we come to understand the essence of animality 'drawn from animality itself and maintained within the limits of animality', we will no longer be able to maintain the thesis that the animal is poor in world. The thesis encourages the apparently fanciful view that, 'if deprivation in certain forms is a kind of suffering, and poverty and deprivation of world belong to the animal's being, then a kind of pain and suffering would have to permeate the whole animal realm and the realm of life in general.' (FCM, 271/393) Would that not be a blatant case of the so-called 'pathetic fallacy'? Perhaps such a thesis could be legitimated with the claim that it can serve to guide us towards the essence of animality *per se*. But surely poverty has nothing to do with animality in itself, which is why, 'Biology knows absolutely nothing of such a phenomenon. Perhaps it is the privilege of poets to imagine this sort of thing.' (FCM, 271/393) It is we, on the other hand, who are supposedly the positive side of this comparison, those who have world and are even 'world-building'. Heidegger then counters this objection by returning us to precisely the problem which he had hoped would be alleviated by the concrete interpretation of the animal environment: 'That is why, through the apparently purely negative characterisation of world in our

examination of the animal's not-having of world, our own proper essence has constantly emerged in contrast, even if not in any explicit interpretation. For we ourselves have also been in view all the time, whether we wanted to be or not, although not in the form of some arbitrary and contingent self-observation or in the form of some traditional definition of man.' (FCM, 272/394-395)

Can Heidegger really remove the force of his own objection? Our own proper essence, which is constantly at work behind the scenes of these specialised theoretical investigations into life, seems to be made to betray itself together with the animal which we thought we had encountered. What Heidegger's objection and subsequent response make clear is that we cannot avoid facing this difficulty. Furthermore, it is not a difficulty which requires resolution one way or the other, but a point at which philosophy finds its way back to the ineluctable tension that lies at the heart of the two types of encounter with which I began this chapter. It is an essential and unavoidable tension which any encounter with the animal must bear and from which it cannot remove itself without falling one way into anthropomorphism or the other way into obscurantism. 'Poverty' is the mood in which this tension bears down upon us and which can 'do without' a solution that would only dissolve the place of encounter.

So Heidegger has not removed the force of the objection as promised. Rather, he tries to teach us to bear the tension of encounter, which must take place in all scientific and metaphysical investigations of life, but which those investigations *can only experience as an objection*: 'The thesis that *'the animal is poor in world'* must remain as a problem, and one which we cannot broach now but which guides the further steps of our comparative investigation, i.e., the proper exposition of the problem of world. (FCM, 273/396) The problem has not been broached if that would mean to resolve and

dissolve its problematic character, to finally discover whether world-poverty is an intrinsic characteristic of the animal itself or simply a projection of our own. But if the problem were to be broached in this way, then the tension which it embodies, a tension which is necessary for the encounter, would be broken. In the end the 'mood of poverty' is an atmosphere which envelops the encounter as such and belongs both to Dasein and to the animal in that encounter. The mood of poverty names above all, that original tension which leads us into the circularity of encounters with living nature.<sup>37</sup>

We can now return to the problem of transposition. When Heidegger poses the three questions: Can we transpose ourselves onto a rock? Can we transpose ourselves onto an animal? Can we transpose ourselves onto another human being?, it may sound as though 'transposition' has been presupposed as a general term for our encounter with any other beings and that the problem is only to discover those particular modes of transposition which apply in each case. However, what becomes apparent in the working out of these three questions is the very inappropriateness of assuming just such a general mode of encounter. What is at stake is an attempt to find a more adequate way to speak of what happens when we encounter the animal.

A trans-position is a moving over of position, a changing of position and taking up of position elsewhere. It is somewhat like a change in 'point of view'. Although this does

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<sup>37</sup> William McNeill comes across the very same problem when he identifies two forms of refusal at work in *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*: '1. The way in which things refuse themselves to the animal, so as to preclude it from attending to them as such; 2. The refusal on the part of the animal to allow our going along with it.' The term 'poverty' thus marks for him the finitude which allows the other to be other in this encounter. See, *Visions: of Animals, Others and the Divine* (Centre for Research in Philosophy and Literature at The University of Warwick: Research Publication Series, 1993) p.52



not lead immediately to the theories of ego and consciousness, we should already be wary of these connotations if we recall the understanding of Dasein which Heidegger worked out in *Being and Time*. Dasein never has a point of view, in its being it is never a point. Dasein is outside of itself, stretched between its being thrown and projection, so that just as there are no points in time but rather ek-stases which are shot through one another, so in its temporalising Dasein is ecstatic and never a point in time or space. The primary danger of speaking of 'transposition' is therefore that we understand human being in general as a position or point of view.

Heidegger's other suggested formulation adds an important dimension and avoids some of the problems which a theory of transposition as a change of perspective or point of view harbours. Our being with the animal is now said to be a kind of 'going along with' the animal in its access to the world and its dealings with the world. It is a movement which tarries alongside the animal but does not displace it. Our being with the animal is a going along with the animal as it, 'sees and hears, seizes its prey or evades its predators, the way it builds its nest and so forth' (FCM, 204/299) Amongst other things this formulation emphasises the continuous movement which belongs to the being of the animal, so that a going along with it is not just a single movement of transposition from one perspective to another. It is rather a continuous achievement, one which falls away as soon as our tarrying alongside the animal is discontinued.

If we add to this the idea that the mood of poverty must be understood as an attunement that does not simply belong to us, but which must be entered and felt and to which we may come to belong, then animal encounters can be understood as empathic-going-along-with the animal. It is empathic, I want to insist, not because it requires us first of

all to attune our feelings to the feelings of the animal, but because the encounter itself, however successful or unsuccessful we feel it to be, involves a specific attunement, which has a very different function from the role of mood in our being-with other Dasein. This attunement, the atmosphere which envelops an encounter with living nature, is what Heidegger names poverty. It is the attunement which grounds the possibility of an encounter with the animal and remains an achievement, although not simply *our* achievement. It is an encounter which differs greatly from the 'being-with' that we share with other human beings, which in a certain sense has always been achieved *a priori*. Thus the problems that we face in our being-with other human beings and our encounter with the animal are different in kind. On the one hand, we find ourselves in an ordinary communality of the non-individualised every-one (*das Man*) in which a certain attunement and modification is required simply to extract the individuality necessary for any 'other' to appear. On the other hand, when we face the animal, when we understand the animal to be looking back at us, it is not at all a matter of extracting ourselves from a prior communality. There is no 'being-with' the animal which we can rely on to form a background for our encounters. If we can empathise with other Dasein only once a fundamental attunement has allowed us to extract our being from theirs, we can feel the being of living nature in our being only if we can become empathically attuned to the dimension which the living beings that surround us inhabit.

Do the terms which we choose to describe our encounter with the animal make such a difference? Is it so important that we allow the appropriateness of a certain call to empathy to be heard once again? Isn't it more important that we begin to do whatever it is that is to be done in order to gain a perspective on the animal in its animality and to

transform our comportment towards living nature? Does it make a significant difference how we describe what is to be done? Heidegger is convinced that it makes all the difference. It is not simply a matter of differing terminology, nor even a matter of refining terminology to more precisely describe a relation which does not change. Rather, the attempt to find an appropriate way to say what the encountering relation involves becomes at the same time the inception of its transformation: '*we find ourselves forced to adopt a new language because of a fundamental transformation of existence.* Or to put it more precisely, this change transpires along with this new language.' (FCM, 203/298) What looked like a preliminary methodological concern is actually the first crucial step towards the transformation of our relation to living nature.

#### **§5 Worlds Apart: Entering the Ecological Dimension**

I have been arguing that the way in which Dasein encounters living nature involves a circularity which manifests itself as the atmospheric tension in the mood of poverty. If we can learn to endure this tension and not to see it as objectionable in itself, then we may be able to enter into a more appropriate relation to living beings. Nevertheless, Heidegger will always maintain that human beings do not inhabit their surroundings in the same way as other living beings. It is this claim which has led many to accuse him of a certain obstinacy in the face of the biological 'facts'. A famous passage from the 'Letter on Humanism', written fifteen years after the course we are now considering, seems to sum up what is problematic about his position:

Of all the beings that are, presumably the most difficult to think about are living creatures, because on the one hand they are in a certain way most



closely akin to us, and on the other, they are at the same time separated from our ex-sistent essence by an abyss... Because plants and animals are lodged in their respective environments but are never placed freely in the clearing of being which alone is "world," they lack language. But in being denied language they are not thereby suspended worldlessly in their environment. Still, in this word "environment" (*Umgebung*) converges all that is puzzling about living creatures.<sup>38</sup>

It is in this passage that many commentators find proof positive of Heidegger's own residual 'humanism' or even anthropocentrism. I want to suggest, on the contrary, that we find here far less of a final pronouncement about our relation to living nature. The 'abyss of essence' is a name for the tension which has to be played out in all our encounters with living nature, it is the abyss in which we must maintain ourselves for any encounter to take place.

Nevertheless, I have no wish to deny the problematic nature of Heidegger's continued allegiance to such an abyssal difference. It is precisely the problematic character of what is to be thought here that grips and puzzles Heidegger. Rather than simply deny certain facts about living beings he wants us to ask again whether we truly understand all of the 'facts'. First of all, when we say that living beings live in relation to their natural environments, which is perhaps the primary 'fact' of all modern biology, do we really understand what we are saying? Furthermore, if we make the apparently traditional and well worn claim that the animal's relation to its environment is not one which involves language, do we know what that means? What Heidegger always emphasises when it comes to formulating any thesis concerning animality, is that it remains problematic. In

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<sup>38</sup> 'Letter on Humanism' in PM, p.248, WM, pp. 157-8

order to see what he finds truly problematic here we need to trace back the position which is presented in the 'Letter on Humanism' to its formation in *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*.

What then is the environment of a living being? First of all we need to point out that the 'environment' in which all that is puzzling about living creatures converges, is not the same term as that which played a key role in Heidegger's analysis of Dasein's everyday involvement with the world in *Being and Time*. That environment was Dasein's *Umwelt*, its surrounding-world. It was therefore a particular modification of Dasein's being-in-the-world, the way in which Dasein most immediately and on the whole ('proximally and for the most part') encounters the world. This surrounding world forms the starting point for an analysis which hopes to penetrate into Dasein's worldhood in general and thus to understand environmentality as the everyday access point to that worldhood. Heidegger argues in *Being and Time* that to say man 'has' an environment is meaningless unless we are able to say what this environment and this 'having' consist in. He even claims that biology can never define these terms but must always presuppose them. (BT, 84/58) In a note added to the text at a later date Heidegger goes even further. When it is a question of biology he asks: 'Is it right to talk about 'World' at all? [A world implied in the surrounding-world of the 'Umwelt'] Only environment! (*Umgebung*, given-surroundings). This 'giving' corresponds to the 'having'. Da-sein never 'has' world.' (SZ, 441, note 58.a) It is these given-surroundings which form the locus for the specific mystery of the living creature described in the 'Letter on Humanism'.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> In fact Heidegger is content neither with the term surrounding-world (*Umwelt*) nor given-surroundings (*Umgebung*) to describe the environment of the living creature. There seems to be too much of a link between the 'having' a world and surroundings being 'given' up to us. In the 1946 lecture course *Towards the Interpretation of Nietzsche's Second Untimely Meditation*, Heidegger



Nevertheless, it is not a mystery which comes after the problem of articulating our own 'having' of a world, but rather the living being is a being which takes a prominent place in our surrounding-world, so the two questions become inseparable.

In *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics* Heidegger is somewhat more generous to biology when it comes to allowing it some understanding of and ability to question the environmentality upon which it must base all its interpretations. Nevertheless he attempts to work out an understanding of the animal's environment which must in a sense come before all concrete experiment. Philosophy may then turn to concrete examples, but not straightforwardly for confirmation of its own concept of environment, for those examples only have meaning on the basis of interpretations bound up with that concept. If there is any confirmation then it will come only in the renewed vitality of our understanding of concrete examples on the basis of the conception of the animal environment which is to be developed.

Heidegger names the conception of environment which he puts forward in this lecture course *captivation* (*Benommenheit*). This term suggests a lack of freedom, an enthrallment to given surroundings. It also has etymological roots in the German word for behaviour- *benahmen*. Yet the concept as Heidegger develops it is not confined to these suggestive terminological allusions, but has quite a precise definition. Captivation has six distinguishing characteristics: 1. It involves the withholding of the manifestness of beings. The animal can behave but never apprehend something as something; 2. Captivation involves a 'being-taken' by instinctual behaviour; 3. The animal is absorbed in the totality of that instinctual behaviour; 4. The captivated animal is open to something else, to being affected within the ring of its instinctual drives; 5. The

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settles on the term 'Surrounding-field-of-Captivation (*Umfeld-Benommenheit*) GA 46, p.49



environment of the animal is not a 'rigid armour plate, rather it allows some leeway within the encircling of its instinctual drives. There is a 'struggling' (*Ringen*) within the encircling ring which characterises life itself and is at once attested to and covered over by such concepts as 'self-preservation' and 'adaptation'. Finally, 6. Captivation is the condition of the possibility of behaviour. It is the a priori structure which allows the animal to behave in certain specific ways and not in others, a structure which will therefore differ between species. (FCM, 259-260/376-378)

The final point is crucial when it comes to avoiding any preemptive assumption that Heidegger's thought of 'animality' dissolves all life into a homogeneous field, unable to account for its huge variety and differentiation. For Heidegger it is not even simply a question of the variety of content which makes up the given-surroundings of various animals. The very structure of those surroundings differ. The given-surroundings of living creatures as such can be made manifest with the aid of a formally indicative concept such a captivation, but such a concept does not serve as a framework to which all varieties of life must conform. The very formality of the concept, as for all formally indicative concepts, allows it to point towards rather than reduce the specificity and variety which is to be met with in each particular encounter. The problem, far from the homogeneity of the field of 'animality,' may well turn out to be the very opposite. Rather than dissolving the whole variety of life back into a primordial soup, is it not the case that Heidegger separates species too rigidly from one another? If each species is assigned its own behavioural structure, can Heidegger account, on the one hand, for the extremities of behaviour of individuals which do not conform to the general structure of their 'species-being,' and on the other hand, for the evolution of one species into another? Is the leeway which he assigns to captivation flexible enough to account for

those movements that apparently take animals beyond their captivating surroundings?

That is a question which we will begin to address in the the remainder of this chapter and in the following chapter. For now it will be helpful take a closer look at the first four points of Heidegger's analysis. Since these rest upon a 'negative' characterisation of what the given-surroundings of the animal are deprived of, it is therefore also necessary to see what having and building a world involves, which being taken by ones surroundings does not.

Constitutive of what Heidegger calls the 'world-building' character of man, is a *double* as- structure. World is characterised in this lecture course as an understanding of 'beings as a whole as such,' a formula which will continue to form the core of Heidegger's conception of metaphysical thought for the rest of his career. I will take the elements of this formulation one at a time and contrast them with the 'openness' without world of the animal. Not that they are really separable, since they are both attempts to formulate what is special about *manifestation*, that overt character of beings which blinds us to their being and nevertheless allows us to work around them in order to catch a glimpse of their becoming-overt. Yet the two aspects of the formulation bring with them a shift of emphasis which will help bring to light different areas of the contrast between environment and world.

Man, as 'world-building,' is open to beings 'as such.' 'As such' (*als solches*) is not to be confused with 'in itself' (*an sich*). The manifestation of beings 'as such' requires an understanding of the being of beings and thus cannot suggest 'things in themselves,' since they lie precisely outside the sphere of understanding. Heidegger only makes this

clear at the very end of the lecture course when it refers us back to Aristotle's distinction between *on hōs on-* ontic truth and *on hē on-* ontological truth. (FCM, 360/523) An understanding of beings 'as such,' that they are beings at all and thus belong to being, is at work in any ontic judgement about those beings. Ontological truth is distinct from but involved in ontic truth. The 'as such' is not a search for the being in itself hidden behind subjective forms of manifestation, but for the being of the being which is obscured from view by the phenomenon itself. In fact, the understanding of manifestation as essentially a movement, of presence as relying upon a *presencing*, will in the final analysis mean that the 'as such' negates any possibility of the 'in itself.' Beings which are essentially caught up in the movement of being cannot find absolute rest in themselves.

According to Heidegger it is an apprehension of beings as such which allows any ontic judgement and thus any scientific judgement about beings. He contrasts this to the relation of a lizard to the rock and sun:

It is true that the rock on which the lizard lies is not given for the lizard *as* rock, in such a way that it could inquire into its mineralogical constitution for example. It is true that the sun in which it is basking is not given for the lizard *as* sun, in such a way that it could ask questions of astrophysics about it and expect to find the answers.

(FCM, 197/291)



Clearly the carrying out of such scientific investigations is only one possibility opened up by our apprehension of beings *as* beings. Few of us ever make such inquiries about the rock or the sun. Yet the fact that we can do so is granted by our apprehension of beings *as such*. The '*as such*' is there already when I encounter the rock *as* a weapon or the sun *as* dangerously hot. These everyday practical dealings already imply a relation to the *as such*. The lizard may move out of the sun when it becomes too hot, but it did not perceive it *as such*.

Later in the course Heidegger makes a somewhat confusing suggestion in an attempt to clarify the distinction between our perception of beings in the world and the animal's openness to its environment. He writes that: 'The one animal is never there for the other simply as a living creature, but is only there for it either as sexual partner or as prey- in either case only in some form of 'away' (*weg*).' (FCM, 250/364) By trying to formulate this 'privation' operating at the heart of animal behaviour in this way Heidegger risks confusing the issue. On the one hand, if the animal can see others *as* sexual partners and *as* prey, then is this not a certain kind of *as*-structure? The '*as such*' could then only be distinguished by a theoretical gaze which gives the *as*-structure a special symmetry: rock *as* rock, animal *as* animal. But the *as*-structure of worldly understanding always allows for such a gaze to develop, since what can be understood *as* one thing can always be understood as something else. Space is thus made for the reflexive understanding, even if it does not in fact occur. When Heidegger claims that animals encounter others as mate and as prey, that is not meant to imply that they inhabit the world of an *as*-structure. Rather, it is precisely the lack of an *as*-structure in this sense that he has in mind. For the '*as*' implies the co-presence of another possibility. I encounter someone as a friend, but he could have been and could become foe, a possibility which is not

obliterated by the friendship. When an animal encounters another as a companion, the 'as' does not signify a space of alternative possibilities in the same way. It is completely absorbed in the companionship. This is something commonly recognised in the unfailing and loyal character which people attribute to the companionship of animals. For the same reason that companionship can have a certain one-dimensionality when forced into the framework of our friendship with other human beings. This is not to say that animals cannot change their 'attitude' towards their surroundings. A female spider, for example, will regard a male first as mate and then as prey. The point is that at each stage the female is fully absorbed by her mate and then by her prey. The scene only takes on a macabre fascination for us because we see the second disposition already there alongside the first. Thus, the fact that human beings frequently regard others as mates and as prey should not be seen as evidence of our lingering 'animal nature.' Mate and prey not only appear to us within a myriad of cultural and historical determinations, but they appear 'as such' in the sense that their appearance is always marked by other possibilities.<sup>40</sup>

It is for the same reason that the description of the living being's absorption in its environment as a kind of being 'away' can also be misleading. This description is meant to point towards the inability of the animal to attend to the other as such. However, it remains the case that the animal's absorption in its mate or prey only appears as an 'away' in contrast to the 'there' of Dasein. Ultimately 'away' implies being 'there' and vice versa. Thus in *Contributions to Philosophy (from Ereignis)* Heidegger will write of the 'being-away' of Da-sein. The way in which the animal is 'away,' if that is an appropriate description at all, is not connected to presence in this way. It relates to the

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40 For an illuminating discussion of Heidegger's understanding human and animal sexuality, see Frank Schalow op.cit pp.37-67.

other in absorption, but its being away from itself is not manifest to it.

At this stage of the argument William McNeill poses a most difficult question: 'What if *we ourselves*, as existing among the living, cannot be said to experience things *as entities as such* either?'<sup>41</sup> Put like that it sounds as though McNeill has been led into confusing the 'as such' with the 'in itself.' But McNeill goes on to make clear that what is at issue here is not whether there is ever an 'as-structure' to our understanding, nor whether that plays a crucial role in the development of theoretical inquiries. What is at issue is whether we *can also* apprehend entities without respect to their 'as such.' This would then open the possibility that we could enter an encounter with the animal which would avoid 'techno-scientific' articulation. I think this suggestion must fail for the same reason that we saw earlier with Derrida, namely, that even refusal is encountered by us *as* refusal. The Other, even the most radically Other, can only be encountered *as* Other and if it is not then it would be cut loose altogether and utterly fail in its alterity. In a later interpretation McNeill seems to realise this danger: 'If the Being of animals and that of humans were absolutely other, such otherness would of course not even be conceivable. The otherness of the animal remains, as Hegel would say, an otherness "for us."... It is an otherness that is manifest within the element of the Same, the element of *Being*, an element which in the 1929-30 course is thought under the title *world*.'<sup>42</sup> This correction, however, seems to move too far in the other direction. Two questions immediately arise. Firstly, if one were to explore a Levinasian notion of alterity in the context of our animal encounters, as we have seen that Derrida does, would it not be

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41 Will McNeill, *Visions: of Animals, Others and the Divine* (Centre for Research in Philosophy and Literature at The University of Warwick: Research Publication Series, 1993) p.45

42 William McNeill, *The Time of Life: Heidegger and Ethos* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006) p.18



precisely the point that such otherness remain 'inconceivable' in the strict sense? Secondly, in the light of Heidegger's insistence upon the distinction between a surrounding-world and given-surroundings is it not precisely the difficulty of conceiving the animal's relation to the element of *world* and the appropriateness of understanding the animal's being in terms of world which remains problematic for Heidegger? What I would suggest then, is that the difficulty in which McNeill finds himself, of how a being whose every encounter is marked by the 'as such' can come to terms with living beings which do not see others as such and thus have no 'terms' of encounter in this sense, is itself precisely the problematic around which Heidegger's inquiry revolves. Nevertheless, although I would insist that a view of the world as an element of the same in which difference can occur must remain problematic in this context, McNeill goes on to point out the great significance which a view of the world 'as a whole' will have for our thinking of animality.

If the 'as such' grounds all our comportments towards beings which we encounter in the world and that includes scientific investigation, it is the 'as a whole' which allows for metaphysics. Metaphysics is the insight into 'beings as such as a whole' and this will always remain Heidegger's definition of that enterprise, both in *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics* where he is beginning a certain rehabilitation of metaphysics in the name of its radicalisation as 'metontology' and later when that radicalisation is pushed towards the 'overcoming' of metaphysics. Before any such radicalisation or overcoming can take place it remains first of all an uncircumventable task to open the dimension of metaphysics and that means to catch sight of beings as a whole.

The character of the world 'as a whole' appears twice in *Being and Time* as the result of

two kinds of 'interruption' of our everyday involvement in the world. There is the interruption which takes place when the equipment of our everyday environmental dealings fails, breaks or goes astray. Then the 'totality' of those dealings is made explicit for the first time and the possibility is opened up that we could extract 'a piece' of equipment, a thing, from the totality. On the other hand, there is the much more radical appearance of the world as a whole which takes place in the mood of anxiety, when it is a case of the withdrawal of beings as a whole, so that the 'whole' character of the world becomes visible to us. Strictly speaking this is not an interruption of the whole. That is why, unlike in the case of equipmental breakdown, such a fundamental attunement can allow the whole to become visible without shattering its character of wholeness. If metaphysics is the understanding of beings as such and as a whole then anxiety gives birth to metaphysics within fundamental ontology.

Now in *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics* the fundamental attunement which is analysed in great depth is not anxiety but profound boredom. Despite significant shifts from the function of anxiety in the earlier work the result of profound boredom is once again the withdrawal of beings as a whole. Heidegger maintains this vision of the whole throughout the lecture course and contrasts it with the scientific investigations of animality which are grounded in the 'as such'. In fact Heidegger finds tendencies in this direction already at work in the biology of his day. It remains to push biologists as far as possible in the direction of a metaphysics of life, an understanding of life 'as a whole'.

In paragraph 61 of the course Heidegger identifies 'two essential steps in biology,' pioneered by Hans Driesch and Jakob Johann von Uexküll respectively. The first is to recognise the 'holistic' character of the organism. This tendency towards holistic

research recognises the structural interconnection of all of the respective functions and structures which have become the objects of research for anatomy, ethology, physiology and so forth. The second step goes even further, recognising the essential bond between the animal and its environment. We have already seen that Heidegger understands the essence of the living creature to be its 'captivation' by its given surroundings. He proposes an ontology of life in which the essence of the animal coincides completely with its structural relations to its environment, that is, as Heidegger explicitly says, its ecology. (FCM, 263/383) He even goes so far as to claim that when the biologist Buytendijk suggests that the unity of the animal and its environment is almost as intimate as the unity of its body itself, then we must reply that, 'the way in which the animal is bound to its environment is not merely almost as intimate, or even as intimate, as the unity of the body but that the unity of the animal's body is grounded as a unified animal body precisely in the *unity of captivity*.' (FCM, 258/376)

Yet there is a further step which Heidegger only begins to make and which is decisive if we are to gain a true appreciation of being in the midst of life 'as a whole'. The measure of the difference which Heidegger perceives between the animal and the human is the difference between what he understands as world and environment. That can only be achieved, I would suggest, when we follow Heidegger in his attempt to understand the animal and its environment 'as a whole' and then witness the explosion of complexity which occurs when these creatures are returned to their native environments, when these environments intersect as is the case in all ecological communities:

The ring that encircles the sea-urchin is quite different from that of the bee, and that of the bee is quite different again from that of the great tit, and this



different from the squirrel and so on. But these encircling rings belonging to the animals, within which their contextual behaviour and instinctual activity moves, are not simply laid down alongside or between one another but rather intersect one another. The woodworm, for example, which bores into the bark of the oak tree is encircled by *its own* specific ring. But the woodworm itself, and that means together with this encircling ring of its own, finds itself in turn within the ring encircling the woodpecker as it looks for the worm. And this woodpecker finds itself in all this within the ring encircling the squirrel which startles it as it works. Now this whole context of openness within the rings of captivation encircling the animal realm is not merely characterised by an enormous wealth of contents and relations which we can hardly imagine, but all of this is still fundamentally different from the manifestness of beings as encountered in the world-forming Dasein of man.

(FCM, 277/401)

This vision goes even further than the 'radical ecology' which understands the bond of the animal to its environment as the condition for the unity of its own body. The essence of each animal is identical with the structure of its environmental relations; but an animal is not first alone, struggling within its captivating ring and then through that openness connected to other living beings. This is not a 'web of life' in which each creature appears as a node connected by a multitude of strands to others. Animal lives intersect, surround and literally engulf one another, even before they devour one another. Living beings are not connected in the first instance by causal, logical or metabolic bonds, but by the interlinked and enmeshed domain of their environmental

rings. The domain of animality forms for Heidegger not a net woven from continuous strands nor a sea of life where we observe the occasional wave and ripple on the surface, but a vast and tangled mesh of captivating rings. That is why we cannot remain content with encountering an animal as another 'looking back' at us. The encounter with one draws us into the domain of animality itself, which is not a continuous and homogeneous plane, but a discontinuous and hybrid mesh. Yet this is a 'discontinuity' without gaps or limits. Living creatures do not come into contact with one another on the outer edge of their being but in the midst of their captivating rings. Ecological phenomenology would thus have no more to do with the logic of the limit in this sense, nor with borders, even when doubled, thickened or folded, whether borders of exchange or borders which touch and fail to touch.<sup>43</sup> It would rather be the defiance of all such limitation and borders of recognition, an intersection of lives which has already taken place.

The move towards an enmeshed ecology does not involve or require the dissolution of essential differences. On the contrary, it requires that they be maintained and upheld in

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43 The logic of the limit informs the attempts of very diverse thinkers to develop an ecological phenomenology. Whilst Derrida speaks of a 'limitrophy', 'The Animal that Therefore I am (More to Follow)', trans. by David Wills, *Critical Inquiry*, 28 (Winter 2002) p.122, David Wood hopes to develop a 'liminology' 'What is Eco-phenomenology?' in *Eco-Phenomenology: Back to the Earth Itself* ed. Charles Brown and Ted Toadvine (Albany: SUNY Press, 2003) p.220. At the extreme other end of the scale of attempts to 'naturalise' phenomenology, Barry Smith develops a formal concept of 'niche' based on mereology and topology of the boundary (see. esp. 'The Niche' in *Nous* 33:2 214-238 and 'Husserlian Ecology' <http://ontology.buffalo.edu/smith/articles/husserlianecology.html>). According to my thesis an ecological phenomenology would have to defy all logic of the limit, no matter how it is complicated, because any limited 'niche' of a living being would be intersected and pulled in multiple directions by a multitude of other encircling rings.



the face of a constant tendency towards dissolution which would see all beings as essentially the same, as undifferentiated in their being. The 'as a whole' of a radicalised metaphysics remains only one way to approach the ecological dimension. Yet it is an important path with respect to biological investigations, which Heidegger hopes to push towards metaphysical questioning. Metaphysics, on the other hand, as a vision of the world 'as a whole' can be prompted by reflection upon the 'holistic' character of life: 'This indicates to begin with that this 'as a whole' is not tailored to any particular area or even any particular species of beings. Rather this 'as a whole,' the world, admits precisely to the manifestness of manifold beings in the various contexts of their being—other human beings, animals, plants, material things, artworks, i.e., everything we are capable of identifying as beings...If we only recall the particular domain of the animal realm, we already noticed there a peculiar enmeshing and intertwining of the rings that encircle animals, rings that in turn are incorporated in a peculiar way into the human world.' (FCM, 354/514)

Yet generic limitations are so familiar to us that for the enmeshed rings of life to become manifest we are required to maintain ourselves in the midst of the ecological dimension. We do not simply find ourselves there by default:

It does not at all require the possibility of being able to distinguish the various specific ways of being, as though these were simply lined up alongside one another in a vacuum. The interweaving of the distinctions themselves oppresses and sustains us, is, as this prevailing, the primordial lawfulness out of which we first comprehend the specific constitution of being pertaining to those beings standing before us or even those beings that



have been made the object of scientific theory.

(FCM, 354/514)

Heidegger never closes the abyss of essence between environment and world, animal and man, but neither does he ever think them as generic realms placed beside one another. His concern is rather to maintain the abyss of essence not as a limit but as a space of encounter. This space is constantly being closed not only by a completely undifferentiated everyday understanding of life but also by an understanding which penetrates into various kinds of being in order to line them up next to one another for classification. The 'abyss' can only become apparent when it is already involved in some 'peculiar incorporation' of interwoven animal lives into the human world. It is not at all that the abyss precludes contact with the animal. Rather, it presupposes that we have encountered the animal not only as a singular being, but through such encounters entered the ecological dimension of animality as such and as a whole.

*We find ourselves in the midst of the intersecting and enmeshed lives of living nature.* Rather than simply happening to find ourselves in that domain, perhaps having gone astray from our own world, that means above all that we come to an understanding of ourselves in the ecological dimension. We do not intersect with living nature, according to Heidegger, as another encircling ring but we are amongst living things. We are in the midst of life and come to be ourselves in the midst of those enmeshing rings.

## **§6 The Privation and the Plenitude of Life**

In the final analysis Heidegger's encounter with the animal may seem to result in failure. The going-along-with that the animal grants to us is always at the same time a refusal. The animal flirtatiously invites a transposition into the sphere of its access to its surroundings and at the same time denies us this access: 'From the side of the animal, what is it that *grants the possibility of transposedness* and *necessarily refuses any going along with?* What is this *having* and yet *not having?*' (FCM, 210/308) It is, we discover, *deprivation* and *poverty*. The poverty of the animal world seems to deny us any being-with and reduces our encounter again and again to a being-amongst or alongside. This is because being-with in the proper sense is something always already fulfilled, it is part of the structure of Dasein. An encounter with animality, on the other hand, always remains as a task to be undertaken.

Is it still possible to say then, as Heidegger does here, 'from the side of the animal' (*Vom Tier aus gesprochen*), to speak from the side of the animal? Do we always find ourselves on our side and the animal on its? When Heidegger asks his three questions concerning the possibility of transposition, is it not the animal's side of the story which seems to be conspicuously missing? Do we not also need to ask what the animal can do? Whether it can transpose itself onto a rock, another animal or into the world of man? If the enmeshed rings of animality are incorporated into the world which man builds, how does it look from the other side? How do human beings appear to the animal? Do they show up only as prey or mate? Is the animal itself guilty of reducing man to a state of animality? It may be objected that such questions cannot be answered until we have first determined what we ourselves are capable of and in particular whether we can carry off the transposition into the animal environment. But perhaps knowledge of our own capabilities only comes with knowledge of the capabilities of



animality. We would then only come into our own by entering the ecological dimension of animality.

In that case the only failure in this encounter will have been not to have recognised that any attempt to remain on one side or another betrays its intrinsically circular nature. The absolutely necessary generosity of this gesture which begins and tries to speak from, 'the side of the animal', betrays animality by affording it too much, more than it can bear. The refusal certainly is from the side of the animal, but it is from the side of the animal in the encounter. It is the encounter with the animal itself which is marked by privation and in the end prevents us from determining whether the poverty in question is our own property or that of the animal.

Moreover, the refusal on the part of the animal is a *telling-refusal* (*Versagen*), a refusal which we must allow to speak to us. It may remind us of a certain silent call which calls to us in our distracted immersion in our own cultivated sociability. That was a call from Dasein to itself which called out for nothing other than for a return to itself. Neither does the telling-refusal of the animal impart any word of comfort to us. It is a call from another who is no other, not because it retains the purity of an absolute alterity, but because it will always hover on the brink of telling us something of its world which is none. It calls us into a disposition in which we can build a relationship which does not come entirely naturally to us, but which will be the only ground for our relation to living nature. This disposition is the mood of poverty. That is where we find ourselves with the animal: in the midst of beings which call us to be-with them and at once refuse all our efforts to do so.



As we have seen, Heidegger insists that the essence of life is only accessible to us in a 'privative' manner. That now means that the encounter with the animal can only take place in the mood of poverty. In *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics* this privative method becomes explicitly deconstructive. The animal's access to the world remains utterly different to our own; for all that they may have access to beings in some way, beings are never manifest for them. Heidegger has not yet found the language to speak of living nature. In fact, language as understood in this lecture course always expresses an ontological relation and so must necessarily fail to speak of animality when it comes down to the essay or experiment which is being-with the animal:

This question now leads us toward the distinction we tried to express by talking of man's *world-building* and the animal's *poverty in world*, a poverty which, roughly put, is nonetheless a kind of richness. The difficulty of the problem lies in the fact that in our questioning we always and inevitably interpret the poverty in world and the peculiar encirclement proper to the animal in such a way that we end up talking as if what the animal relates to and the manner in which it does so were some being, and as if the relation involved were an ontological relation that is manifest to the animal. The fact that this is not the case forces us to claim that the *essence of life can become accessible only if we consider it in a deconstructive (abbauenden) fashion.*'

(FCM, 255/371)

Always and inevitably we misinterpret the animal's poverty in world. In this case interpretation is as such misinterpretation. Yet what Heidegger hints at here are hidden powers of language which have not yet been tapped. The fact that he thinks even at this

stage that there is a language, or a way of relating ourselves to language, which would not be wholly inappropriate to our encounter with the animal is encouraging. The deconstructive task which he assigns to us must no longer be thought of as one of stripping layers away from man until we arrive at the animal. Rather it must be thought of as the deconstruction of a philosophical language which thinks life in terms of layers of ability and the recovery of a language which allows us to maintain the circle of encounter without experiencing that circle as something objectionable in itself.

I have tried to show that 'the animal' which is met with in this encounter does not refer to a homogeneous zone of life for which any example will do. Rather, this formally indicative concept is supposed to point us towards the enormous variety of animal life. Only by engaging with the specific living beings that we encounter can we find our way into the ecological dimension where the encircling rings of living beings are enmeshed and woven into one another. To gain a true appreciation of the living beings that we exist in the midst of we cannot remain 'face to face' with them, but must allow that encounter to draw us into an appreciation of the ecological dimension. It is only there that the true specificity of each living being is revealed. When Heidegger speaks of the 'essence' of animality, that is not something that can be discovered and then an investigation made into its environmental relations. The essence of animality is to be found nowhere but in this plenitude of relations.

Furthermore, I have argued that 'poverty' is not to be understood as implying either an hierarchical relation nor as simply marking alterity.<sup>44</sup> Rather, poverty is the attunement in which animal encounters take place. Strictly speaking then, it is not the *property* or

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44 These are the only two 'values incompatible in their "logic"' which Derrida is able to discern in such terminology. *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question* p.49

exclusive right of either man or animal. The mood of poverty is like an expropriation (*Enteignis*) in which man is divested of his most treasured possessions in order to make room for an appropriate relationship to take place (*Ereignis*). To hold out hope for an encounter which is not marked by privation, as Derrida does, would be to remove oneself from the very task of building a space for encounter which the sense of poverty demands.

Two convergent sets of questions now arise. Firstly, it remains to be seen whether Heidegger's understanding of animal capabilities is adequate. For deconstructive ecology the question of capability does not demand an investigation of what various species and individuals are able to do. Rather, it asks about the meaning of this *being able*. Are the abilities of living beings, for example, different in kind to the abilities of human beings, even if the actualisation of these abilities appears to produce identical results? Are these abilities themselves marked by privation and if so, why should this be the case? Secondly, how are we to understand the relationship between the richness of the ecological dimension and the poverty which Heidegger attributes to the animal world? Are they reconcilable? Do they simply refer to different measures of wealth in each case? Or is there a more intimate relation between the two, such that the plenitude of life would find room for itself, for movement, change and growth, only in the space of privation? If an appreciation of the ecological dimension has removed the animal from solitary confinement it still remains in captivity. Can we find resources in that captivity to set living nature free? Does an environmentalism which insists on the poverty of nature only offer a negative alternative to philosophies which insist on the plenitude and joyful exuberance of life? After all, Heidegger ends his 1929/30 lectures by citing Nietzsche's song of Zarathustra, in which appear the lines: 'The world is deep,/ Deeper than day can comprehend./Deep is its woe,/ Joy-deeper than heart's agony: Woe



says: Fade! Go! But all joy wants eternity, Wants deep, profound eternity!' Is this an expression of opposition between the joy and woe of the world? Are the poverty and plenitude of life at odds with one another as transition and change seem to be with eternity? Is it possible to think the plenitude, exuberance, movement and growth of living nature without founding that plenitude on a plenum?<sup>45</sup> Or think a gathering of powers which is never complete or fulfilled? Can we find in the depths of the world a strife which rests neither upon a distinction nor a contradiction? Or discover a fundamental dynamic that incorporates the world poverty of the animal? In order to answer these questions we will have to take a closer look at the *dynamics* of the ecological dimension which these animal encounters have allowed us to bring into view.

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45 Spinozist ecology insists upon the plenum as the background for the plenitude of life. It is therefore required to assume the dynamism of substance whilst renewing the plenum ontology and metaphysics of constant presence which makes it inexplicable. See, e.g. Freya Mathews *The Ecological Self* (London: Routledge, 1991) pp. 76-90

## Chapter 2

### Dynamic Ecology

What happens to nature in technicity, when nature is separated out from beings by the natural sciences? The growing- or better, the simple rolling to its end- destruction of “nature.” What was it once? The site for the moment of the arrival and the dwelling of gods, as the site- still *physis*- resting in the essencing of being.

Since then *physis* quickly became a *being* and then even the counterpart of “grace,” and after this deposition was completely set forth in the compulsion of calculating machination and economy.<sup>46</sup>

Martin Heidegger

Ecology is a dynamic discipline. It has become part of the dynamics of complex systems.<sup>47</sup> General systems dynamics attempts to discover patterns and laws in the

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<sup>46</sup> CP, 195/ 277- translation modified.

<sup>47</sup> For a complex systems approach which attempts to unify many fields in the natural and social sciences, see for example, Yaneer Bar-Yam, *Dynamics of Complex Systems*, (Addison-Wesley, 1997)

development of any complex system, which can be applied across scientific disciplines from complex physical systems and the development of ecosystems and biospheres, to economies and human societies. As part of such a general dynamics, ecology would not necessarily lose all of its distinctiveness, nor would the life of an ecosystem or biosphere necessarily be explained 'reductively' in terms of principles derived from outside ecology. Rather, when it comes to complex systems, the underlying principles of all disciplines begin to converge.

If the study of complex systems now gathers around the sign of 'dynamics' and our interest is in how living nature is thought under that sign, then we must consider how dynamics is thought or whether it is thought in any determinate way at all. Does 'general dynamics' consider what is *dynamic* about complex systems beyond the indeterminate generality of change and exchange within and between systems? What part does dynamism play in the thinking of a living system? If it remains indeterminate, will it not be determined by prejudices at work in the thinking of movement, change and development which governs dynamics? Only by returning to the phenomenology of *dynamis*, of potentiality, possibility and force will we be able to avoid the occupation of this space of indeterminacy by prejudices and tendencies already on the way to the domination of living nature and keep it open as a space in which a broad diversity of possibilities can flourish.

To start with, is it absolutely clear that a general theory of dynamics takes us fundamentally beyond a 'mechanistic' view of nature? Certainly it is able to recognise, for example, 'auto-poetic' phenomena in both evolutionary and developmental biology and beyond. This would seem to move us decisively beyond *mechanics*, understood as



the study of externally acting forces and perhaps even back towards a *physics* of internal movement and sources of change. Nevertheless, although some of these ideas have only been developed in full over the last half century, it is worth taking pause for thought when we see Heidegger proclaim decisively in 1943 that: 'Modern natural sciences, chemistry no less than physics, biology no less than physics and chemistry, are and remain so long as they are, 'mechanics.' 'Dynamics' is also a mechanics of 'forces'.<sup>48</sup> Had Heidegger simply failed or refused to recognise the ongoing and deep seated changes which were taking place in the physical sciences? Or did he perhaps see the *essence* of mechanics as abiding elsewhere? Not only in the physics of externally acting forces as opposed to the physics of 'internal' sources of change, but already in operation wherever possibilities and potentialities are in the service of actuality. From this perspective we might be able to make more sense of Heidegger's certainty that science will not so easily escape the bond of mechanism.

It thus becomes necessary to return to that moment when the bond of service and privilege between *dynamis* and *energeia* was forged. In Aristotle's texts, if we follow Heidegger's interpretation, we can find resources to think the true place and radicality of *dynamics*. Not in order to cut potentiality completely free from the actual, but to allow for the cultivation of a free space in which actualisation is no longer a compulsive activity and the actual is not itself completely imprisoned in advance by the fixed 'range of the possible.'

In this chapter I will explore the possibilities for thinking what remains unthought in contemporary dynamics and was already in the process of being concealed in Aristotle's treatment of *dynamis*, *energeia* and *entelecheia*. I begin by establishing the position in

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48 GA 55, p.88

which ecology finds itself when integrated into general systems theory and argue that this integration was already prepared by the original definition of ecology as the 'economy of nature'. I then return to Heidegger's *Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics* and some related texts to see how the 'dynamics' of living nature is understood there by way of the distinction between capabilities (*Vermögen*) and capacities (*Fähigkeiten*). Having seen why Heidegger is not completely happy with his initial characterisation of capacities I move on to a reading of his 1931 lecture course *Aristotle's Metaphysics Theta1-2: On the Essence and Actuality of Force*. Here we find Heidegger draw out of Aristotle's 'general dynamics' a whole spectrum of *dynamis*, together with an interpretation of *logos* which does not confine its range to human capabilities as did the initial distinction between capability and capacity. Finally, I argue that what we must draw from this extraordinary reading of Aristotelian dynamics is a thinking of living beings which undermines key aspects of Heidegger's own earlier account, which was still wedded to the idea of the 'structure of behaviour' and as such inadvertently perpetuated the economisation of nature.

## **§7 General Systems Dynamics and the Economy of Nature**

There are many places to which one could turn for an account of the integration of ecology into dynamic systems theory. One particularly interesting account for our purposes is that given by Stuart Kauffman. Kauffman is a theoretical biologist who is engaged in speculative attempts to integrate theories of the evolution of complex systems in physics, chemistry, biology and the social sciences. In order to do this he makes use of the concept of an 'adjacent possible'. This concept is an attempt to explain what Kauffman sees as a general tendency for complex systems to become more



complex over time. The biosphere is always at an 'actual' degree of complexity, but this state expands persistently into an 'adjacent possible'. He begins by developing the concept in terms of the development of complex organic molecules:

The adjacent possible consists in all the molecule species that are not members of the actual, but are *one reaction step away from the actual...*

Note that the adjacent possible is indefinitely expandable. Once members have been realized in the current adjacent possible, a new adjacent possible, accessible from the enlarged actual that includes the novel molecules from the former adjacent possible, becomes available.<sup>49</sup>

Kauffman claims that the biosphere is thus characterised by a more or less persistent, although not uniform, expansion into its adjacent possible. The adjacent possible does not make up a pre-ordained logical space into which the actual expands. It is 'adjacent' because new dimensions of possibility are opened up at each stage of expansion, making it impossible to calculate the precise direction of the expansion in advance. Nevertheless, the expansion is persistent and indefinite, and each step is bound to the previous state of actual complexity. This is first explained in terms of a chemical potential which drives the system into expansion: 'The simple conclusion is that there is a real chemical potential from the actual to that adjacent possible. Other things being equal, the total system "wants" to flow into the adjacent possible.'<sup>50</sup> This is of course only an inexact analogy. However, it does show the continued influence of a general concept of potentiality, in that it never differs in its being across systems, gains its power from being "real" potential and which persistently and compulsively actualises

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49 Stuart Kauffman, *Investigations*, (Oxford University Press, 2000) p.142

50 Ibid p.143



itself. It is this 'dynamic' that forms the basis for an understanding of ecology as part of the general dynamics of complex systems.

The 'adjacent possible' is not confined to chemical potential. It operates on 'chemical, morphological and behavioural levels.'<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, it is a principle that may be applicable to other complex systems, especially economies. Thus, Kauffman writes: 'It is no accident that the words for economics and ecology have the same Greek root, "house." Ecology and economics are, at root, the same.'<sup>52</sup> Not only do they operate upon the same principles, but the 'metabolic exchange' of trade is at work in the same way in ecology and economy: 'The trading of the econosphere is an outgrowth of the trading of the biosphere.'<sup>53</sup> Economy is simply one direction which the persistently expanding biosphere has taken.

Ecology and economy have in fact been bound together for a long time. From its very inception as a scientific discipline ecology has been thought as 'economy of nature'. The first recorded use of the word 'Oecologie' by Ernst Haeckel in 1866 was glossed as 'the economic science of ways of life and of the living external relations of organisms to one another.' (*der Wissenschaft von der Oeconomie, von der Lebensweise, von der äusseren Lebensbeziehungen der Organismen zu einander.*) Three years later he offered a further definition:

By ecology, we mean the body of knowledge concerning the economy of nature (*Naturhaushalt*)- the investigations of the total relations of the animal

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51 Ibid p.207

52 Ibid p.211

53 Ibid

to its organic and to its inorganic environment; including above all, its friendly and inimical relations with those animals or plants with which it comes directly or indirectly into contact- in a word, ecology is the study of all the complex interrelationships referred to by Darwin as the conditions of the struggle for existence. <sup>54</sup>

Ecology has always been economy. Not only that, but ecology has always sought justification in and sought to give justification to political economy. This does not take place primarily in a reductive doctrine which seeks to 'carry over' the principles of biology into social and economic science. One could cite the influence of Malthus on Darwin or the influence of Darwin on Marx. Ultimately neither is grounded in the other. They are already bound together by a general 'economisation' of human action and living nature.

It is this historical bond of ecology and economy that Heidegger has in mind when he writes in *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*: 'It is not by accident that Darwinism emphasized the concept of self-preservation, which in this sense grew out of an economic perspective on man.' (FCM, 259/377) The problem turns around how the relation of the animal to its environment is conceived, something which we have already touched upon in the last chapter. By way of elaboration Heidegger too appeals to the etymology of the word 'ecology':

The word ecology derives from *oikos*, the Greek word for house. It signifies the investigation of where and how animals are at home in the world, of the

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<sup>54</sup> Cited in, Donald Worster, *Nature's Economy: A History of Ecological Ideas*, Second Edition, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) p.192

way in which they live in relation to their environment. But in Darwinism precisely this was understood in an external manner in the light of the question of adaptation. In Darwinism such investigations were based upon the fundamentally misconceived idea that the animal is present at hand, and then subsequently adapts itself to a world that is present at hand, that it then comports itself accordingly and the fittest individual gets selected. Yet the task is not simply to identify the specific conditions of life materially speaking, but rather to acquire insight into the *relational structure between the animal and its environment*.

(FCM, 263/382)

The problem with evolutionary and ecological science is, according to Heidegger, that it has still failed to interrogate the notion that animals 'dwell' in their environments rigorously enough. That bond is something which simply arises when organism and environment are subsequently brought into conjunction, it being possible to investigate either as present at hand or 'extant' beings outside of this conjunction. It seems unlikely that this characterisation is entirely just to most classical or contemporary Darwinism. Certainly nobody believes that the adaptation of living beings to their environments is like the pouring of water into a glass. Nevertheless, concepts such 'co-evolution' will not necessarily eradicate Heidegger's difficulties, since rather than making the environmental relation 'internal' to the structure of living beings, they frequently only serve to make an external relation reciprocal over time. To work out precisely how Heidegger's interpretation of living nature relates to Darwin and Darwinism would be a complex project in its own right.<sup>55</sup> We will only be able to touch upon certain aspects of

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<sup>55</sup> That Heidegger would reject or deny the theory of evolution seems to me very unlikely. He is



that problem in what follows. My main purpose is to trace a particular line of thought concerning the *dynamics* of living beings in order to discover how it feeds into a dominant understanding of living nature. In this passage Heidegger refers to 'Darwinism' as an entire scientific and cultural movement, but it is certain that much of his criticism is meant to apply to Darwin himself. At least this much is clear for the present: for Heidegger ecology must begin with this relational structure, with living beings not as living *within and alongside* their environments, but their living as itself *the living out and unfolding of the life of environmental relations*.

The appeal to the *oikos* of ecology can only be a preliminary step. The relational structure which makes up the *oikos* is still left entirely indeterminate by this etymology. In particular, it is quite possible that the ecological relation is already predetermined in a quite specific way within the economy of nature. We have seen Heidegger's preliminary characterisation of the internal, intrinsic and essential, relational structure as 'captivation'. Is it not possible that this interpretation itself is caught up in the economisation of ecology, which would then turn out to be more deeply rooted than the interested in the ontological assumptions inherited in the concepts employed by this theory. Thus it is interesting to see that he focuses on the concept of adaptation and the externality it implies as the problematic features of Darwinism. The adequacy of these concepts has also been challenged in recent evolutionary theory, with the development of concepts such as 'exaptation,' 'internal constraint' and the repudiation of exclusively functionalist explanation in evolution. See, e.g., Stephen Jay Gould, *The Structure of Evolutionary Theory* (Cambridge, Mass: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002) pp.1214-1258. For suggestive remarks as to how Heidegger might have understood evolutionary biology as a 'theory of the real' see, Frank Schalow, *The Incarnality of Being: The Earth, Animals, and the Body in Heidegger's Thought* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006) pp.174-176. For a more skeptical view of whether Heidegger's thinking of science will ultimately be up to the challenge of evolution see, Miguel de Beistegui, *Thinking with Heidegger: Displacements* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003) pp.103-118

simple carrying over of a particular 'economic perspective on man'? If we are to appeal to etymology, then what is needed is not a reminder of the common root of *oikos* in economy and ecology, but further to this a fuller characterisation of the mode of that dwelling. We need to remind ourselves of the *difference* between the regulation and ordering of economy and ecology, that is, the difference between the *nomos*, of economy and the *logos* of ecology. We can begin by asking if there has ever been an eco-logy properly speaking, an interpretation of living nature which focuses on the determining role of *logos*, if ecology has from the start been determined as the economy of nature? Such an ecology would not necessarily be 'lawless,' 'arbitrary' or 'random' but would rediscover the breadth of meaning which *nomos* once had in conjunction with *logos*, setting about freeing living nature from a narrowly conceived law of compulsion.

The law and compulsion which has come to govern economy is *growth*.<sup>56</sup> Thus in all complex systems Kauffman finds a drive towards greater complexity and expansion of the 'adjacent possible' as actuality progressively encroaches upon the space of possibility, which at each stage is secured upon the platform of the actual. Diversity and

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56 It is not only ecology but metaphysics itself that has been bound up with an 'economic perspective on man'. Frank Schalow provides a very helpful 'counter-balance' to Heidegger's concentration on the metaphysics 'production' inherited from the Greeks, to the detriment of what he sees as the fundamental feature of modern economies, *exchange*. He repeats the analysis of everydayness in *Being and Time* with an eye towards exchange and capitalist economics. In doing so he hopes to recover resources for a 'another form of exchange'. In this context Schalow also refers us to the common root of 'dwelling' to be found in ecology and economy. It seems to me, however, that we fail to understand the true law of 'economy' if we do not see that production and exchange have both been yoked to the compulsion of growth. See. Frank Schalow, *The Incarnality of Being: The Earth, Animals, and the Body in Heidegger's Thought* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006) pp.15-20



complexity become a function of the expansion of the actual into the ever increasing logical space of possibility. What an *ecology* demands is the primacy of difference and variation, joined and gathered by a *logos* which does not compel the constant encroachment of the actual into an ever increasing space of possibility. We need a conception of growth which does not function under this law of constant expansion of the actual. This requires a rethinking of the potentiality of living nature as a terrain or dimension of living capacity with a flexible horizon which expands and contracts, through which life negotiates various pathways.

The argument of the rest of this chapter is that the economisation of ecology ultimately rests in an inability to pursue and overturn the metaphysics of *dynamis* at the heart of ecological thought, even and perhaps especially when it becomes a part of 'general dynamics'. First of all I will return to the distinction which Heidegger draws in *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics* between animal and human 'dwelling' in an environment, this time in order to highlight the distinction he makes between living capacity and human capability. However, Heidegger himself maintains that this phenomenology of living nature remains incomplete with regard to a set of problems revolving around 'movement' and 'historicity'. These problems come to the fore once more in the 1931 lecture course, *Aristotle's Metaphysics Theta-2: On the Essence and Actuality of Force*. The phenomenology of living nature is now incorporated into the broader philosophical problem of *dynamis*. In following this line of thought Heidegger allows us to see how a one-sided interpretation of *dynamis* has had a direct bearing upon the economisation of nature and how his own earlier phenomenological interpretation still relied upon and fed into that economisation to some extent. The exposure of this



one-sided interpretation of *dynamis* involves the refraction of a broader spectrum of dynamics than can be imagined by any 'general dynamics' and will allow us to uncover the roots of Heidegger's claim that living nature is exploited, exhausted and even annihilated by metaphysics prior to its actual destruction.

## §8 From Captivation to Living Potential

In the previous chapter we saw that Heidegger insists upon a distinction between the surrounding-world of Dasein and the interwoven given-surroundings that make up the ecological dimension of animality. I outlined the six features that he ascribes to the animal environment understood as *captivation* and contrasted them to the 'as-structure' of Dasein's surrounding-world. In order to understand how Heidegger's thinking of animality develops after the 1929/30 course we now need to consider the *dynamics* of the animal environment and the difficulties it gives rise to.

Captivation, the environmental relation understood as the condition of the possibility of behaviour, involves the 'self-encircling' of living beings with a ring of capacities. The circle of capacities is not fixed, for example, by the organs available to the animal for use. Rather, the reverse is the case, the organs of an organism remain 'subservient' to its capability. Thus the paradigmatic examples of animal life turn out to be the 'lowest' kinds of single cell protoplasmic organisms, that 'produce' and 'exchange' organs with no fixed structure:

Around the food in each case there forms "an aperture which first becomes a mouth, then a stomach, then an intestine and finally an anal tract." We are

thus confronted with a determinate sequence of organs which replace one another in this specific sequence. This conclusively shows that *capacities* for feeding and for digesting are *prior to the organs in each case*. Yet at the same time this capacity, a complete dynamic process which we could also roughly describe as 'assimilation,' is a regulated one. Indeed, it is a form of regularity in relation to a determinate sequence of processes.

(FCM, 224/327)

This kind of '*Wechseltier*,' literally an '(ex)change-animal', produces digestive organs because it has the capacity for digestion. Yet it does not do so in an arbitrary fashion, but rather in a way which is essentially regulated. The regulation is 'inner regulation,' not a prescription (*Vorschrift*) which is imposed upon the capacity from above or without.

(FCM, 228/333-334)

The difficulty comes not with the inner regulation of capacities, but when we try to account for the mutability of the regulatory ring itself. The ring does not form a 'rigid armour plate' around the animal, nor do the pathways of instinct and habit precede the capacities which they regulate within the ring. Yet it remains unclear whether the ring itself, as Heidegger understands it, is essentially mutable. On the one hand, he claims that: 'Nothing else can penetrate the ring around the animal. Here we are not yet concerned with any particular content whatsoever, but only with the fundamental character of that to which the animal can stand in relation at all.' (FCM, 254/369-370) Not just anything in the habitat of the animal can penetrate into its encircling ring. The animal can only be stimulated by that which it has a prior relation

to, i.e., what already comes within the range of its capacities. Those capacities can only be 'disinhibited' by specific environmental stimuli. On the other hand, the animal does seem to be exposed to disruptive forces in its environment:

For with the animal's being open for what disinhibits, the animal in its captivation finds itself essentially exposed to something other than itself, something that can indeed never be manifest to the animal either as a being or a non-being. Rather that which disinhibits, with all the various forms of disinhibition it entails, brings an *essential disruption* into the essence of the animal.

(FCM, 273/369)

Nevertheless, precisely how *essential* this disruption is remains debatable. Is the ring of capacities itself thus exposed to mutation and re-inscription? It is the lack of clarity here that leaves the notion of captivation at the very least incomplete, if not highly questionable. Heidegger himself realises the incompleteness of the analysis when he admits he has been unable to deal adequately with what might be called the 'life process' and even the 'history' of life. Neither ontogeny nor phylogeny can be adequately understood if the essential *motility* of life is left out of the account. (FCM, 265/385) The notion of *captivation* not only leaves this account incomplete, but seems to bring with it an essential difficulty when it comes to thinking this peculiar kind of *motility*. A more adequate account cannot simply add motility to the organism as captivated in a ring of capacities, but must itself transform our understanding of the phenomenon as a whole.

If we are to move towards an understanding of living capacities that can take account of



what is here called *motility*, together with the 'inner regulation' and retention of those capacities, then I suggest we take a clue from the contrast that Heidegger sees between these capacities and another kind of potential. Contrasting the capabilities (*Vermögen*) of human beings to the capacities (*Fähigkeiten*) of animals, he argues that the former are always informed by a *logos* prior to the propositional logic of truth and falsity. This originary *logos* holds out the *possibility* of truth and falsity. Falsity is not a perversion or evasion of truth but a co-originary possibility *made-possible* by *logos*, as is every human capability: 'The essence of the *logos* consists precisely in its containing as such the possibility of 'either true or false', of 'both positive and negative'. It is precisely the *possibility* of all these kinds of transformation- which have merely been outlined in a rough and ready fashion- that comprises the innermost essence of the *logos*.' (FCM, 337/489) Nevertheless, the *logos* that makes possible human capabilities is not an indeterminate logical space in which possibility is thought as a mode belonging to certain possible states of affairs:

For whatever is possible does not become more possible through indeterminacy, so that everything possible would, as it were, find room and be accommodated in it. Rather whatever is possible grows in its possibility and in the force that makes it possible through *restriction*. Every possibility brings its *restriction* (*Einschränkung*) with it.

(FCM, 363/528)

If human capacities are made possible only by a *logos* that brings with it its own restrictions, rather than the restrictions of a fixed boundary, then might it not also be the

case that living capacities bring with them *their own* restrictions? Not, to be sure, of the same kind as human capabilities, but their *own ecological dynamic*? If so, then animality might be freed at once from *captivation* and from the law of *compulsive striving* against both external and self-imposed boundaries, against which its behaviour and growth are seen as a continual struggle. It is just such a possibility that arises in Heidegger's return to the phenomenon of *dynamis* following the 1929/30 course.

### §9 Gathering the Spectrum of *Dynamis*

We can and must investigate everything which belongs to the essence of the animal's being in accordance with its inner possibility. That is, we can and must investigate amongst other things the inner possibility of capacity as such, so that we can recognise in our investigation a peculiar range of quite different kinds of possibility.

(FCM, 236/343-344)

In the summer semester of 1931 Heidegger returns to the *locus classicus* of metaphysical exposition of potentiality and actuality in the lecture course entitled *Aristotle's Metaphysics Theta<sup>1</sup>: The Essence and Actuality of Force*.<sup>57</sup> The entire lecture

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<sup>57</sup> Between *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics* and *Aristotle's Metaphysics Θ* Heidegger held two lecture courses, both of which prepare the way for the return to Aristotle's notion of potentiality. A large part of *The Essence of Human Freedom: Introduction to Philosophy* (GA 31) is already concerned with Aristotle's text, that is, Chapter 10 of Metaphysics Θ. Heidegger defends, contrary to much philosophical and philological work of the time, the place of this chapter concerning truth at the



course is devoted to the first three chapters of *Metaphysics*  $\square$ , a text little more than 140 lines long. Heidegger translates the text in small paragraphs and follows each of these by an extended commentary. Accordingly, after an introduction which seeks to locate this reading in a general interpretation of Aristotle's work, situating it against the backdrop Brentano's problem of the manifold senses of being in Aristotle and whether the unity of these senses is adequately understood as analogy, the main text has three parts which correspond to the three chapters under consideration. Although Heidegger presents us with a close reading I think it will become clear that he is developing his own philosophical view concerning *dynamics*, in dialogue with Aristotle. There is a great deal in this lecture course to be taken in from both a philological and philosophical point of view. I will confine myself to two points which address our problem of how we can think a dynamics of living nature in a way which can highlight what is unthought in general systems dynamics.<sup>58</sup> The first concerns a spectrum of senses belonging to

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apex of the metaphysics of potentiality and actuality. The following semester Heidegger lectured on the first two parts of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* (GA 32). In Heidegger's discussion of the section of Hegel's book entitled 'Force and Understanding' we also find a preparation for the revisiting of potentiality. Hegel finds in the Kantian view of the understanding a vision of nature in which the concept of a law of nature and of a force of nature turn out to be indistinguishable. A play of forces in nature also turns out to have an intrinsically double aspect: 'Force is both at the same time: being-driven-back-into-itself as the drive-towards-externalisation.' (GA 32, pp.114-115/166) In Heidegger's re-thinking of Aristotle's concept of *dynamis* one can discern an attempt to get to the root of this duplicity in force, but in doing so to think it no longer as the mutual movement of externalisation and internalisation, a thought which is also be found at the heart of much thinking of living nature in terms of drives and which, as I shall argue below, Heidegger is not immune to himself.

58 Nancy J. Holland's paper 'Rethinking ecology is in the western tradition: Heidegger and/on Aristotle', *Continental Philosophy Review* 32: 407-420 (1999) provides an excellent introduction to Heidegger's text, relating it to themes which emerge in his later work, especially 'The Question Concerning Technology.' Moreover, Holland makes fruitful suggestions as to how Heidegger's reading of Aristotle



*dynamis* which Heidegger brings into view. The second concerns an essential duplicity and finitude of all *dynamis*, the essential *restriction* which goes with empowerment, right across the spectrum.

In the first part of the main text Heidegger tries to give the reader a sense of how ubiquitous the concepts of actuality and potentiality remain, even if they have fallen out of favour in modern scientific discourse. These concepts are at work throughout our thinking and yet we find ourselves impotent when it comes to delimiting precisely what we mean by concepts such as force, ability or power. Potentiality is everywhere, in a multiplicity of forms, yet we never seem to be able to lay our hands on it. *Dynamis* presents itself to us as a range of possibilities. Heidegger sketches them in a way that may at first sight give the impression of an arbitrary list. It will, however, contain the germinal seeds of practically every problematic to be encountered in Heidegger's

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can be understood as an attempt to recover aspects of the metaphysical tradition which are conducive to ecological philosophy, when cursory readings of Heidegger have so often led to sweeping disparagement of 'Western Metaphysics' as the source of all technological domination of nature. In particular, Holland takes up Heidegger's understanding of Aristotle's 'passive potentiality' as 'bearance,' and points out that this recurs as a feature of the earth in 'The Origin of the Work of Art'. Much of what follows is an attempt to take up Holland's preliminary suggestions, broaden their significance as part of our overall understanding of Heidegger as an ecological thinker and simultaneously focus on the problematic case of animality and living nature. Holland herself leaves this problem to one side, citing Derrida's criticisms of Heidegger's account of animality as making the issue particularly contentious. Since we have found those criticisms to be not entirely justified, we must return to the problem posed by living nature. Michael Zimmermann comments briefly on Holland's paper in, 'Heidegger's Phenomenology and Contemporary Environmentalism', in *Eco-Phenomenology: Back to the Earth Itself*, ed. Charles C. Brown and Ted Toadvine (New York: State University of New York Press, 2003) pp.73-101. However his criticisms revolve around a set of issues concerning Heidegger's thinking of *physis*, which will be dealt with the chapter 4.

thought in the coming years:

All this multiplicity- is it something arbitrary and trivial, or does a basic occurrence of every being and of each way of being here present itself to us? Force (*Kraft*)- the forces of material nature; what would nature be without forces? Capacity (*Fähigkeit*)- the capacities of living being; capability (*Vermögen*)- this and that capability of the human; art (*Kunst*)- the art of Michelangelo, of Van Gogh, what would we understand of both if we did not understand art? Violent force (*Gewalt*)- the violent force of Napoleon; power (*Macht*)- the power of the divine, the power of faith.

(AMT, 61/73)

How are we to understand this range or spectrum of *dynamis*? Three misunderstandings have to be guarded against. Firstly, we are not presented here with various species to be subsumed under the genus *dynamis*. These are not particulars to be subsumed under a universal. In the following paragraph Heidegger admits that it appears as if what is at issue are various specific kinds of ability (*Können*). Each falls under the general concept of ability, which is something ultimate and not open to further definition. If we leave it at that, 'philosophy is finished.' (AMT, 61/73) What is required is that we open the dimension of *dynamis* and attempt to think through the way in which this multiplicity presents us with a difference that is nevertheless gathered as a set of phenomena that belong together. Secondly, this is not supposed to be a developmental series. We should not presume that there is some latent developmental narrative to be told here, whereby brute forces of material nature lead to other kinds of ability through a process of



involution, evolution or sublimation. It is clear that 'violent force' can be the most brute ability, yet it sits in this spectrum between art and divine power. Finally, this is not a range of possibility in the sense of an arrangement set out before us, of abilities which are at hand, complete and ready for classification or to be taken up as abilities. There does indeed remain something arbitrary about this list.<sup>59</sup> It is not intended to set out a system of potentialities. Rather, it is intended to open up the realm of *dynamis* as a ubiquitous mode of being which we nevertheless seem unable to set out before us in an arrangement. Rather, the list should be understood as a kind of spectrum. The elements can be refracted so that we can see them in contrast to one another, or they can be focused and gathered together.

That Heidegger should choose to emphasise the multiplicity of *dynamis* at this point may seem somewhat strange. The first chapter of *Metaphysics* □ attempts to provide a guiding definition of *dynamis*, that is, to provide us with a thread which runs throughout the series. It is not a question of analogy. Indeed, Aristotle specifically sets aside analogical meanings of *dynamis*, such as mathematical 'powers,' and concentrates this part of the investigation on *dynamis* as it pertains to movement, *dynamis kata kinēsin*.

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59 This is confirmed by the fact that in the previous paragraph Heidegger has enumerated another such list: '.. force (*Kraft*), capacity (*Fähigkeit*), art (*Kunst*), talent (*Begabung*), capability (*Vermögen*), competence (*Befähigung*), aptitude (*Eignung*), skill (*Geschicklichkeit*), violent force (*Gewalt*), and power (*Macht*)', yet he insists that such a list is, 'not completely arbitrary'. (AMT p.60/72) Although each particular list remains in itself somewhat arbitrary, the philosophical task is to dig out what it is that makes such a list possible, what holds it together as a list of elements which belong together, whilst maintaining the elements in their difference. Although this first spectrum is actually more extensive than that which follows it I have decided to concentrate on the latter because it brings into juxtaposition those elements of the spectrum which are of particular interest for our current investigation.



The guiding definition of *dynamis* offered by Aristotle is '*archē metabolēs*' the source or origin of change, which Heidegger translates as the 'from-out-of-which of change.' However, Heidegger is not working against Aristotle's search for a unity within the multiplicity of *dynamis*. He is insistent upon the 'guiding definition' and the need to uncover all that Aristotle understands by the origin of change. What Heidegger is arguing is that this 'guiding definition' does not unite *dynamis* under a sign of identity, but rather opens a dimension in which we can encounter essentially different kinds of *dynamis*. He is trying to draw our attention towards the essential diversity which is gathered or focused into a unity. This is not unification under a general principle. The 'guiding definition' does not provide us with a rule for categorisation under a concept, but a focal point around which essentially different kinds of *dynamis* can be gathered. The problem which now arises however, is that the very possibility of opening out the spectrum of *dynamis* as a simultaneous gathering of its powers, turns out to pertain in particular to one moment in the series: human capability. What are the consequences of this 'privileged' relation and how far can it be maintained?

To open up the possibilities which lie between Dasein and living nature, we must concentrate on the juxtaposition of the capacities of living beings and the capabilities of the human. This juxtaposition is brought into focus in the second chapter of *Metaphysics*  $\square$ , and thus in the second main part of Heidegger's text. In the opening of this second chapter Aristotle clearly distinguishes different kinds of *dynamis*. He focuses his attention on the distinction between *dynameis alogoi* and *dynameis meta logou*; still standardly translated as 'non-rational' potentialities and potentialities 'accompanied by reason.'<sup>60</sup> Yet Aristotle reminds us that the spectrum of *dynamis* is more

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<sup>60</sup> *Metaphysics* 1046b. *An New Aristotle Reader* ed. by J.L Ackrill (New York: Oxford University Press,

complex than this. There is firstly the distinction between those beings which are 'without soul by way of belonging to them and co-constituting them' and those which 'are present in the besouled.' (AMT, 99/117) (The point of these quite peculiar translations should become clear in what follows). There are two distinctions: that between besouled and soulless beings and that between beings with discourse and those without. All those with discourse must have soul, whilst those with soul need not have discourse. The former are human beings the latter animals and plants.

Heidegger now argues that we must understand this 'having' of soul and of discourse in a very particular way. What is at stake in these distinctions is not whether beings have particular properties or abilities which belong to them. It is their way of being as a whole which is being characterised. This is something that Heidegger highlights in his translation of the expression *enuparchousin*, as 'belonging to and co-constituting,' which is completely lost in translations like 'present in,' as though these forces just happen to emerge in a certain region of beings at a particular time. Rather, these forces, 'belong to and co-constitute the being and the being character of the realms of being which are encountered.' (AMT, 99/117) Thus, in the case of the soul, 'Through being besouled, a being is something living. "Life," however, is a way of being.' (AMT, 101/119)<sup>61</sup> In the same way, to say that a being 'has discourse' is also to mark out an essential character of its being. Not something which is added to a besouled being in an amalgam, but a characterisation of *how* that being is besouled, which characterises its being as

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1987) p.323

61 The point had already been made succinctly in *The Fundamental Concepts of Ancient Philosophy*: "The soul is not a being (the psychic) next to the bodily (physical), but rather it is the way of being (*Seinsart*) of certain bodies, indeed those which on this ground are distinguished as living beings from the lifeless." (GA 22, p.184)



something living in every respect.

It remains for us to consider how Heidegger understands the distinction between capacity and capability now that powers have been placed within a broader spectrum of *dynamis*. Are there any significant differences with or advances upon what was said in *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*? At first sight that would appear unlikely. Heidegger pays far less attention here to characterising the capabilities of living beings in themselves. He forgoes the kind of detailed analysis of biological experiment which made *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics* so unique and, as we have just seen, stays very close to Aristotle's text. For all that, I suggest we can find here a reorientation of an entire field of concepts which will not only inform the direction of Heidegger's philosophy in the coming years but call into question the approach to living nature pursued so far.

We saw above that at the end of *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics* Heidegger traces back the *logos* of propositional statements first to an essential ambiguity between truth and falsity and then to a projection of Dasein in its world-building, a 'making-possible'. The analysis of Aristotle's text in the 1931 course begins by translating *logos* as 'discourse' (*Rede*). This is a term which was used in *Being and Time* to designate the 'existential ontological ground of language.' (BT, 203/160-6) There Heidegger had tried to win back the phenomenon of language, of speaking and listening, from various abstract frameworks into which it had been forced. Now he seems to take what was there understood as a partial view of language and expand it so that it escapes even the remit of 'discourse'. In *Being and Time* the 'making known' (*Kundgabe*) of experiences was still considered to be a partial and abstract understanding of language. (BT,



206/163) Now this making known expands to incorporate the entire breadth of speech acts that lie outside the scope of propositional judgements, which have been the focus of so much attention in more recent years: '*Logos* is *discourse*, the gathering laying open, unifying *making something known* (*Kundmachen*); and indeed above all in the broad sense which also includes pleading, making a request, praying, questioning, wishing, commanding, and the like.' (ATM, 103/122) Questioning makes known in the sense of exploring (*Er-kunden*); public discourse in the sense of announcing (*Ankündigung*), proclaiming (*Verkünden*), and declaring (*Künden*): '*Logos* is thus discourse in the utterly broad sense of the manifold making known and giving notice (*Kundgeben*)-"conversance" (*Kundschaft*).' (ATM, 103/122)

Conversance is the *logos* which 'belongs to and co-constitutes' human beings. It not only embraces the whole breadth of 'discourse,' eschewing translations such as 'reason,' 'judgement' and even 'sense,' it points beyond language as a *particular* faculty, ability or even existential of Dasein. In doing so, Heidegger suggests, it also becomes possible to see how *logos* can form a peculiar relationship with force so as to produce *capability* (*Vermögen*). All human abilities or 'faculties' are the result of an 'extraordinary relationship' between force and conversance.

It is the elaboration of this extraordinary relationship that Heidegger understands as the focus of Aristotle's interest in the second chapter of book  $\square$ . Our question concerns what happens at the margins of this elaboration to the capacities of living nature which are 'without *logos*'. Heidegger now seems to seriously entertain a possibility which many have thought he is always too quick to lay to rest. Can we actually be sure which beings have conversant capabilities and which have capacities without conversance? It

is worth dwelling on this briefly, because Heidegger is at pains to suggest that for all its categorial tendencies, Aristotle's phenomenology of life opens this question rather than deciding it for us. Heidegger recalls the characteristics of life which are to be found in *De Anima*. Life has two chief characteristics, movement and perception, which allow a distinction between 'bare' or purely 'nutritional' life and the life of animals. It is surprising that Heidegger makes little comment on this, considering the way that we have seen the analysis of 'captivation' seems to work against the possibility of any such distinction. In any case, he passes over this and concentrates on perceptive life. Now it becomes utterly unclear whether we should attribute 'conversance' to the animal. Animals have, after all, *to kritikon*(□9): the possibility of *separating out* and *bringing out* of something, for example, to stalk prey, to lie in wait, to notice, to know their dwelling places, to protect themselves against attackers' (AMT, 106/125). We may be reluctant to attribute conversance to the animal because that is meant to be the defining characteristic of the human. Nevertheless, the question becomes not only possible but pressing. It emerges not because we realise that animals have superior abilities which we did not know they had before. It is not a question of discovering that animals have or do not have certain abilities, but of how we understand the abilities which we know them to have. The 'boundary' question is then opened up in a completely different dimension, one which in many ways is far more difficult to decide. It is no longer a question of deciding whether certain beings do or do not have certain abilities, but of questioning the basis upon which they 'have' those abilities. Only when *logos* is understood as conversance, as the way in which human beings are capable and not as itself any particular ability, can the question which Aristotle poses be understood in all its difficulty. (AMT, 106/126) Only then does it make sense to suggest that this question is the most difficult to decide, whilst leaving open the possibility that, 'The perceiving



of the animal is [...] from the ground up other than that of the human.' (AMT, 169/196-197)

This analysis does not give us a clear understanding of living capacities that are not 'conversant,' but it does make it clear that the issue cannot be decided simply by designating certain abilities as belonging to conversant force and then looking to discover which kinds of beings possess those abilities. The 'boundary' only becomes visible when we see what is peculiar about conversant force. What is peculiar is that this force can direct itself 'at one and the same time' *towards contraries*.<sup>62</sup> Aristotle's point is easily lost. It has nothing to do with the flexibility of conversant forces, that they can be directed at a greater range of different goals than non-conversant force. Nor is it even a question of whether 'contraries play a role or not,' whether the realm of non-conversant force can encompass contraries. Rather, the issue is whether the force as the force that it is, not as implying another force, is directed toward contraries. (AMT, 113-114/132-133) The example that Aristotle gives is warmth, which is directed only at making warm, whilst the art of doctoring is directed at one and the same time at sickness and at health. Not that it is directed at bringing both about. Rather, as the doctor traverses the realm of her ability she has both in view. Health as that which she hopes to actualise and sickness as the contrary which she is trying to avoid. What Heidegger is trying to draw our attention to is that there are not various forces at play here which simply contradict one another, e.g., the doctoring capability aiming at health and the living capacities, such as a virus acting contrary to the doctoring capability. The capabilities of the doctor are directed at an aversion of sickness which is at one and the same time a promotion of health. The direction towards contraries is possible because the realm of conversant force is, 'given to it necessarily and completely according to its

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62 *Metaphysics* 1046 b4-7



ownmost potentiality,' whilst for force without conversance, 'its realm is completely closed off, it lies completely outside the possibility of being opened or closed off.' (AMT, 114/134) That is not to say that it does not have a specific realm or range within which its force can operate or be withdrawn. Warmth operates only within a specific realm of ability, as do the diverse abilities of living beings. Ultimately, what conversance lends to force is the ability to *explore* the realm of its own ability, not through multiple traversals but in one and the same traversal. Exploration does not just illuminate and uncover the course which it takes, but it opens up a realm of possible courses which will not be actualised: 'This *inner boundary belongs to conversance*; the adopting of one course of exploring, and thus the simultaneous emergence of other courses which remain unexplored.' (AMT,124/145)

We still have not answered the question concerning the capacities of living beings. The example provided by Aristotle seems to take us further away from this goal, contrasting as it does a material force of nature with a human skill.<sup>63</sup> Yet I would suggest that we

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<sup>63</sup> This problem remains unsolved in an otherwise very illuminating essay on Aristotle's notion of potentiality by Giorgio Agamben. He comes to the following conclusion about these distinct realms of potentiality: '*Other living beings are capable only of specific potentiality; they can only do this or that. But human beings are the animals who are capable of their own impotentiality. The greatness of human potentiality is measured by the abyss of human impotentiality.*' *Potentialities: Collected Essays in Philosophy*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999) p.182. By bringing to the fore the essential part played by the finitude of potentiality, i.e, that in itself it involves 'impotentiality', Agamben picks up a prominent theme in Heidegger's reading. Still, he leaves various points unexplained. Firstly, it remains unclear if there is anything distinctive about living beings. Why 'other living beings' and not just 'other beings'? Secondly, Agamben remains somewhat unclear about the significance of the fact that, as we will see, all potentiality involves impotentiality or finitude and thus the conversant direction towards contraries is a specific and significant taking up of this finitude, rather than simply finitude *per se*.

now have the resources to answer this question in the only satisfactory way. Recall that we were left with an uncertainty as to whether the realm of possible perceptions in an animal is really completely 'pre-circumscribed' or whether it leaves room for re-description and essential disruption. If we decide that the latter must be the case, as we must if the evolution of life is to be understood, then we can outline a threefold distinction of *dynamis* in the following manner. Force that is without soul is a force which has a completely pre-circumscribed realm or range to which it is neither open nor closed off. A living capacity has a realm which is pre-circumscribed, a closed ring of possible behaviour, but which is always open to re-circumscription. There cannot be a radical opening of the realm of capacity, a complete breakdown of its horizon of potentiality, since that would simply entail death for the living being. Nevertheless, capacities can be opened to re-circumscription. Thus we can only partially agree with the formula of Gilles Deleuze that: 'A living being is not only defined genetically, by the dynamisms which determine its internal milieu, but also ecologically, by the external movements which preside over its distribution within an extensity.'<sup>64</sup> The correct understanding of a living capacity entails that we come to the point where we see these dynamisms of 'internal' milieu and the 'external' movements as inseparable elements of capacity. They form the structure of one dynamism, the dynamics of living capacity. The ecological forces which open and redefine the realm of a living capacity are not 'external' to the dynamisms of living capacity; they make those capacities what they are by circumscribing the terrain in which a living being can move. So there are not two realms of force mutually redefining one another in a living being. Rather, the structure of living capacity is the opening of a pre-circumscribed ring to re-circumscription. Finally, conversant force is force which is open to another dimension. It is open not only insofar as its realm can be re-circumscribed, but open to that realm itself as a force

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64 Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton, (London: Continuum, 2004) p.269



which is always traversing a course one way and at the same time *a course which has the terrain of possibility in view*. Thus, this other course within its realm of capability, one which is not that which it is taking, constantly informs that which it is taking. *Dynamis* belonging to conversance can be 'directed towards contraries'. Conversance does not in itself alter the breath of the terrain of potentiality that is to be traversed, but profoundly affects the manner in which the realm can be traversed.

Having undertaken an analysis of how Aristotle understands human conversant force as production (*Herstellen*), which we are unable to pursue in detail here, Heidegger tries to set conversant force back within the broader context of the dynamic spectrum. At this point he gives us a clue as to how it might be possible to conduct a major departure from Aristotle's thinking of living nature. Not one more refutation, but precisely a *departure*, a thinking of the dynamics of ecology which finds its origin in Aristotle's thought, where certain possibilities of that thought have been covered over. Heidegger has already argued that Aristotle, 'achieves the division [of conversant force from force without conversance] by going back to the division of beings into *apsyche* (soulless) and *empsychan* (besouled).' Now he returns once more to *De Anima*. In order to set conversant force back into the spectrum of *dynamis* he makes explicit for the first time Aristotle's fundamental commitment to an understanding of the soul as a *striving after*. The origin of movement in a besouled being is always a fleeing or pursuing. (AMT 128/150 cf. De anima □9) The soul is always a striving soul and that striving always sets up something *striven after*: an *orekton*. This setting up of something striven after links animal striving and the striving of human production because both rest upon "representation" (*Vor-stellung*) understood in a very broad sense. In production, according to Aristotle's famous analysis, we require an idea of what we are aiming at



and thus set-up something striven after. (AMT, 123/144) Yet this conversant production is now set into the context of the striving soul:

To briefly clarify these connections: an *orekton* is something posited in a striving, through the striving as such set forth (*Vor-gestelltes*). Striving is inherently setting-after something and as such already setting-before; this comportment can however, set aside this setting-after and is then only setting-before. Everything that we call "representing" (*Vorstellen*) and "intuiting" is inherently this "bare setting before, this bare representing"; it is not, for example, the reverse: first represented and then striven after.

(AMT, 128-129/150-151)

This, it seems to me, is the fundamental account of the being of living beings which has informed practically the entire history of metaphysics whose origin can be traced back to Aristotle. Here we see the root of the metaphysics of life grounded in physics of impulse and inhibition. The representative capabilities of man are here seen as eminently natural, resulting from a mere restraint of striving, which has already set out the object to be striven after. Intellectual capabilities are thus the result of the restraint of the impulses of life, a genealogy which Nietzsche would later describe in detail. The range of *dynamis* is fenced into an enclosure and all possibilities are seen as more or less complex permutations of impulse and restraint, the effects of which can be calculated by the economy of nature. By pursuing this 'naturalisation' of human capabilities, rather than allowing the spectrum of different ways of negotiating the possible to become apparent, the thinking of life is already placed on the path that has

led to the economisation of nature.

As always with these historical lecture courses it is difficult to separate out those lines of thought which can help us to undo the economy of nature from those which inaugurate and maintain it. Sometimes they are one and the same thought given a different inflection. Nevertheless, I think it can be plausibly argued that in this meditation on Aristotle's thinking of *dynamis* we find both the origin of the economy of nature and the resources to begin a shift towards a true ecology. In setting conversant force back into the movement of a striving soul Heidegger hits upon that point in Aristotle's text which is responsible for covering over a completely different way of proceeding. That other procedure can, nevertheless, be glimpsed in his meditation on conversance. Instead of tracing conversance back into a striving soul which has always already set-up and set-before itself that which is striven after, could we not trace conversance into a broader *logos* of nature, one which would itself then be responsible for forming our understanding of living capacity, indeed, of the whole spectrum of *dynamis*. A *logos* that gathers the natural range of dynamics? Such a possibility does indeed come to light, where *logos* is understood as a gathering and joining of the entire spectrum and only secondarily as the realm to which human capacities belong. Whether this broader meaning is philologically secondary is difficult to determine, but that does not ultimately affect the philosophical point:

Whether, then, in the history of the word *logos* the meaning of the gathering joining was immediately accompanied by the meaning of gathering saying, a meaning that language always already has assumed, and in fact in the manner of conversance; whether, in fact, originally language and discourse

was directly experienced as the primary and genuine basic way of gathering joining, or whether the meaning of gathering and joining together was only subsequently added over onto language, I am not able to decide on the basis of my knowledge of the matter, assuming that the question is at all decidable. (In any case, we already find within philosophy the multiplicity of the meanings of *logos* in Heraclitus).

(AMT, 104/122)

If conversant force is joined into the whole spectrum of *dynamis* it is no longer necessary to trace it back to a striving, primordially representative, soul. Rather, it would be possible to situate conversance in a range which is itself already gathered by a *logos* before language. For Heidegger it will never be a question of answering this historical and philological question in a decisive manner. Rather, all the force of his thought will be determined by an attempt to gather *dynamis* around the pole of this gathering and joining before and beyond discourse. The other side of this attempt will be a reflection upon the multitude of ways in which the opposite procedure is built into our way of thought. Rather than thinking living nature from out of this gathering-joining, we are habituated to thinking language from out of the striving representations of the *animus*.

It has now become somewhat clearer what is at issue in our attempt at a shift from economy to ecology in our thinking of living nature. This attempt can only preliminarily be understood in terms of the etymology which we drew attention to at the beginning of this chapter, insisting upon a difference between the law and the word, which had been



covered over in favour of the etymological identity of *oikos* in ecology and economy. Pointing out this difference still leaves the matter indeterminate. What is at issue is not an attempt to return our thinking of nature to language, to produce for instance, a linguistically constructed understanding of nature. What is called for is not a constructivist conception of nature, nor the extrapolation of vital force and even reason from 'bare' physical systems. Rather, the call is for a reorientation of our thinking of the whole spectrum of forces which, taking its cue from considering conversant force, leads us to reject the view that there is anything like 'bare nature' from which complex vital structures and then structures of reason arise. This need not even be a rejection of all thought of 'law' or structure, but a shift in what we understand the root of natural laws to be. No longer patterns of rigid regularity nor categorisations of natural kinds under the rule of universals:

*Logos*: the relation (*die Beziehung*), the relationship (*das Verhältnis*). The relationship is what holds together that which stands within it. The unity of this together prevails over and rules the relation of what holds itself in relation. *Logos* means therefore rule, law, yet not as something which is suspended somewhere above what is ruled, but rather as that which is in itself the relationship: the inner articulation and joining (*Fügung und Fuge*) of the beings that stand in relation. *Logos* is the *ruling jointure* (*regelnde Gefüge*), the *gathering* of these beings related among themselves.

(AMT, 103/121- translation modified)

In trying to think living nature from out of the relation between Dasein and the animal

in the previous chapter we were already making the first step away from the economy of nature in which laws are understood as regularities to be applied uniformly in all realms of nature, towards an ecology which allows the 'ruling' jointures to emerge only from out of the relations themselves. Ecology does not apply the rule of law to nature, it receives its ruling jointure from nature.

Even as he first articulates this gathering jointure Heidegger notices the necessary duplicity which it entails. "Language," understood as conversance and thus joined into the spectrum of force, rather than as a modification of the striving soul, entails a dispersal. Just as the spectrum of force, to be a spectrum at all, requires that fundamental differences be maintained between forces whilst they are gathered together in a spectrum, just as a word gathers multiple meanings (none more so than the word *logos*) whilst maintaining their essential equivocality, so this gathering is at the same time a dissemination: "'Language" is understood here in the broadest sense of *logos* as a conversant gathering, as a gatheredness of beings in "one"; in Dasein, which is at the same time a dissemination (*Zerstreuung*).'" (AMT,109/128)

It is essential that the ecology of dynamics does not receive its determination from a focus on the particular and determinate relation which human capacities have to this gathering and joining, the relation which makes them conversant capabilities. That would be to collapse the spectrum into an identity with conversance and establish the most inappropriate kind of anthropocentrism. On the other hand, if we find ourselves able to follow up the suggestion that conversance receives its capability from elsewhere, from a realm which maintains a diverse range of possibilities, then we may be able to think of nature itself quite differently and in so doing free living beings from the



economy of drives and the striving soul.

## §10 Withdrawal from the Structure of Behaviour

To conclude this chapter we turn towards an important phenomenon, or rather an important feature of the phenomenality or presencing of *dynamis*: *withdrawal* (*Entzug*). In a certain sense it is an anti-phenomenon. Yet it must on no account be understood as noumenon; it is rather withdrawal in and through appearance. Nor should we conceive this 'withdrawal' as a force which works against the phenomenon's drive towards its own appearance. Withdrawal is ultimately not a structural moment in the productive 'force' of phenomenality, but what escapes from productive actualisation as appearance, whilst allowing what does appear to show itself.. It is not a counter-phenomenon, but allows phenomena to appear, force to take effect, potentiality to be actualised, whilst never making phenomena, effect and actuality constantly available as possibilities in a space of logical possibility.

*Withdrawal* (*Entzug*) is the term which Heidegger chooses in 1931 to translate Aristotle's word *sterēsis*, which is more usually translated as 'privation'. It plays an absolutely crucial role in his understand of Aristotle. Although he does not say as much, Heidegger may well have already had in mind the concept of *sterēsis* when he insisted upon the animal's 'poverty' in world in *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*.<sup>65</sup> It

<sup>65</sup> Françoise Dastur has suggested this context for understanding the function of 'privation' in the 1929/30 course. *Heidegger et la Question Anthropologique* (Louvain: Éditions Peeters, 2003) p. 50. She also makes a helpful comparison with the 1939 essay on Aristotle's *Physis*. However, without an analysis of the 1931 course on *dynamis*, it remains unclear why Heidegger's development of these themes moves in the direction it does. Only then do the inadequacies of the earlier formulation become apparent.



would perhaps not go too far to suggest that Heidegger there attempted to give a 'steretic' account of animality; to show that living nature 'withdraws' from us at the same time as drawing us in. The account of 1931 will make some of these connections explicit, but also force us to address some inadequacies of the earlier account.

The subject of the 'withdrawal' of force is broached by Aristotle at the end of chapter 1 of Book  $\Lambda$  of the *Metaphysics* and is thus correspondingly dealt with at the end of the first main section of Heidegger's lecture course. One should bear in mind that by returning to this earlier point in the argument we are not returning to a description of a more primitive kind of force, as if, for example, force in general were best exemplified by the 'forces of material nature' and the capacities of living nature and capabilities of human beings could be thought as modifications or developments of this bare force. Rather, every kind of *dynamis* has to be thought of as having a particular relation to the 'guiding meaning' of *dynamis*, set out in this first chapter as the 'from-out-of-which of change'. So having gained a perspective on the peculiarities of living capacity, it is appropriate that we now return to the guiding meaning to pin point exactly what Aristotle discerns in *dynamis*, force-being, which draws all of the particularities together as different modes of *dynamis*.

At the end of chapter 1 Aristotle makes two famous points with regard to *dynamis*, which have appeared to some commentators to have little to do with the guiding meaning and are thus thought to be superfluous to the main point of this chapter. Yet Heidegger insists that they are key points and that they show that Aristotle is not simply out to elaborate different kinds of force with regard to a universal type, but to grasp the essence of *dynamis* or 'force-being', which can then inform our understanding of the

entire spectrum. The first point is the distinction between 'active' and 'passive' force; the second is the inner connection of force with 'unforce', the privation or withdrawal of force.

Now with regards to the distinction between what is usually termed 'active' and 'passive' force, Heidegger translates *dynamis poiein* as a force of doing or production and *dynamis paschein* as a force of bearing or toleration. Now the question which we are compelled to address, according to Heidegger, is whether one can properly speak of two forces here at all. Aristotle explicitly claims that in some sense the two are not two kinds of force but are gathered together in the being of force itself, are *one, hōs mia*. What the distinction thus pertains to, according to Heidegger's interpretation, is not two kinds of force 'present at hand' and acting in tandem as the subject and object of force, but a split between 'ontic' and 'ontological' concepts of force; two dimensions of force itself, which nevertheless form an 'inner cohesion.' Force itself is 'divisive': 'Thus force does not consist of two forces, but rather, if force-being is in a being, then that being is split into two forces.' (AMT, 91/107) The divisiveness of force is not a difference between kinds of force, but the unification of the being of force (ontological) which necessarily disperses itself into the spectrum of force (ontic).

If we follow this line of interpretation then it becomes clear why Aristotle then goes on to speak of force in relation to 'unforce' or the withdrawal of force. This is not simply another disconnected comment about force, but is an attempt to pursue the ontological concept of force-being. As we have seen, every force has its own range or scope, a circumscribed terrain which is not present-to-hand and mapped out before hand, but waiting to be discovered as it is negotiated. This terrain may or may not be open to re-



circumscription and may or may not be manifest in itself as range of possibility, depending on the kind of *dynamis* we have in view. 'Unforce' or withdrawal has exactly the same scope as the force to which it forms the flip side and all of the distinct kinds of traversal are negotiations of a terrain which withdraws itself from view. It does not withdraw 'over the horizon,' as it were, but is itself undiscovered terrain. Now we saw that 'conversant force' is a force for which the range it traverses can itself become manifest. Yet that does not mean the whole scope of possibility is mapped out by reason as human beings traverse the terrain of their capabilities. They too have a particular relation to the withdrawal of force which matches the range of their capabilities. Blindness for a human being is not a complete absence of visual capability even if one is born blind, but a specific range of incapability which matches precisely the range of the capability of sight. On the other hand, part of what it means to 'possess' a capability is to be able hold it in reserve and remain reticent. If we can speak we can remain silent. That is not a further capability, but part of what it means to be able to speak. If we can see we can become blind; and even if we do see we can remain blind to what is in front of us. Our capabilities are forces which are not only 'inwardly bound to loss and withdrawal,' but can incapacitate themselves on this basis, becoming incapable or remaining reticent. Living beings can also be incapacitated within their range of capacity, a range which we have seen to be necessarily circumscribed but never fixed in its boundary. This perhaps does not amount to reticence, but neither does it require an inhibition of drives. Any traversal of a range of living capacities is in itself the withdrawal of other capacities within the range, even if this withdrawal is never present to the animal. If a 'gene' in the widest possible sense, the capacity to generate any living phenomenon, whether behavioural or morphological, is 'switched on,' it traverses the range of capacity in a way which necessarily involves the withdrawal of other possible



traversals. If that is true of individual living beings, it is also true of living beings as a whole and living beings as they relate to their 'organic and inorganic environments.' In that case we must challenge the basis of many attempts to understand living nature, including Heidegger's earlier understanding of captivation as a 'disinhibiting ring' of drives.

What this inner connection to its own withdrawal ultimately entails is that all *dynamis* is *finite*. It has a range or scope which exactly matches the range of its own withdrawal. Hence, although conversant force has a particular relationship to this finitude which allows it the 'duplicity' of being directed at once towards opposites, at the end of his discussion of chapter 2 Heidegger returns to *the inner finitude of the entire spectrum of dynamis*:

With this is not meant the thrusting up against external boundaries and constraints and advancing no further, or the simple eventual failing; rather, the essential finitude of every *dynamis* lies in the decision over this way or that required from out of itself and indissociable from its enactment. Where force and power, there is finitude. Hence God is not powerful, and "omnipotence," considered properly, is a concept which dissolves, like all its companions, into thin air and is unthinkable.

(AMT, 135/158-159)

What the recognition of this finitude and inner divisiveness of all force entails is the unsettling of a persistent *vitalism* which continues to haunt even the most ardent anti-

vitalist interpretations of living nature. If vitalism is at its core the attribution of a 'force of life' to living beings, which is in itself mysterious and inexplicable, then vitalism is not overcome by the disowning of any 'force of life' in favour of bare material forces, nor the disowning of the concept of force altogether in favour of flat and featureless spaces of 'possibility'. If force-being is not adequately grasped in itself then there is no reason to think that material 'forces' are less mysterious than a 'life-force'. All of that assumes that force-being is itself transparent. Perhaps in the end there is necessarily something 'mysterious' about 'force,' if everything which withdraws and is not open for inspection present-at-hand before us is a mystery. Vitalism thought essentially is not the attribution of a mysterious force to living nature, but the unwillingness to acknowledge the inner finitude of living capacities. Spinozism would thus be the highest form of vitalism; the identification of God's "omnipotence" with the naturing of nature.

Heidegger has himself constantly been working against vitalist ontology in his analysis of 'impossible' source of Dasein's possibility. One of the primary aims of this analysis was to withdraw our understanding of human being from the 'biological' context in which Heidegger thought it has been placed by Max Scheler. In 1925, in the lecture course *History of the Concept of Time*, Heidegger had discussed Scheler's ontology of 'impulse' and 'resistance.' Scheler manages to move beyond an understanding of human beings as a merely thinking things, yet remains in fundamental error when it comes to thinking how Dasein is 'in the world' by trying to maintain an analogy to living beings:

Thus the conception of beings in the world as resistance coheres in Scheler's case with his biological orientation, that is, with the question of how the world in general is given to primitive forms of life. In my view, this path,



which seeks to explain primitive forms of life all the way down to one-celled animals, is fundamentally askew.<sup>66</sup>

Against the 'isolated encountering' of an impulse which meets with the resistance of the world, Heidegger develops the notion of 'Care' as the most fundamental and basic form of Dasein's encounter with the world.<sup>67</sup> For Scheler the structure of behaviour, ultimately all behaviour, is an impulse which meets resistance. But Dasein cannot be understood by analogy to or extension of the driven impulses or strivings of living nature. Nevertheless, this criticism seems to leave the idea that living nature itself can be properly understood within this framework completely intact.

Sure enough, in *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics* Heidegger still thought animality at least partially in terms of instinctual drives. The environment of captivation is described at one stage as a 'disinhibiting ring,' which the living being encircles itself

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66 GA 20 p.305. David Farrell Krell discusses these passages and sets them in the wider context of Heidegger's relation to 'life-philosophy' in *Daimon Life: Heidegger and Life-Philosophy* pp.78-84. What he does not do, perhaps because he does not take account for the developments in the 1931 lecture course, is to pin point how these arguments must be directed against Heidegger's own conception of animality of 1929-30.

67 For my discussion of these two positions see §2 above. In the present context a helpful comparison could be made with Ted Toadvine's attempt to lay out the framework for an ecological phenomenology. Toadvine identifies the fundamental character of nature as 'resistance phenomena.' These are comprised of "blind spots" in classical constitutional phenomenology, phenomena which resist constitution and are thus closer to what we have, following Heidegger, called withdrawal than they are to a vitalist 'resistance' to striving. Nevertheless, the problem with this formulation is that it tends to suggest a resistance of certain constituted beings to later comprehension, rather than a resistance or withdrawal which works within the constitution or coming to presence of all beings. See, Ted Toadvine, 'Naturalizing Phenomenology', in *Philosophy Today*, SPEP Supplement, 1999.



with. This 'disinhibiting ring' is in fact the range of its capacities, the range of its *dynamis*. This ring is a range of capacities which can release 'instinctual drives'. Peculiarly, this formulation of the structure of behaviour reverses our usual understanding of the inhibition and restriction of drives. Are not drives precisely 'uninhibited' in themselves, only to be inhibited when they come up against some obstacle to their fulfillment?

Yet if the instinctual drives are precisely characterised by their uninhibitedness, then why should the instinctual drive have to be disinhibited in the first place? Should we not rather say that it is the other which the animal comes upon which inhibits its instinctual drive? We speak with a certain legitimacy of the uninhibitedness of instinctual drives when we consider the results of such activity as it were, what these drives drive towards and what they are driven to do, and especially when we also relate these things to our own possible comportment in and toward them- the question of control and so on. But if on the other hand we reflect upon the instinctual drive intrinsically as such- rather than upon the instinctual activity into which it can be released- and consider the instinctual structure itself, then we can see that the instinctual drive precisely possesses an inner tension and charge, a containment and inhibitedness that essentially must be disinhibited before it can pass over into driven activity and thus be 'uninhibited' in the usual, ordinary sense of the word.

(FCM, 254/370)

What Heidegger has in mind here in distinguishing between the drive in itself and the activity into which it can be released is already the Aristotelian distinction between potentiality and its actualisation. It is important to note that Heidegger allows a certain legitimacy not only to an ethology which takes its cue from activity into which drives are released, but even by analogy to a view of our own comportment as a psychology concerned with how drives are released and inhibited. Yet he argues that if we look at the instinctual drive in itself we will see that it is not always already released into its activity, it is not already on the way to actualisation, only to be stopped if it comes up against an inhibiting factor. When we come to consider the structure of instinctual drives themselves there is a certain reversal in the structure of behaviour. The 'inner tension' which characterises the animal's capacity needs to be disinhibited in a dimension prior to its uninhibited activity and any resistance which that activity might meet with.

Nevertheless, is Heidegger not still thinking animal capacities on the basis of a model provided by the activity into which they can be released? If a drive in itself displays an 'inner tension' it still seems to be straining against itself to be released into activity. The 'disinhibiting ring' reverses and internalises the structure of behaviour if that structure is thought as a set of activated drives which may meet with resistance. Yet the drive itself still seems to be thought on the model of a 'play of forces,' whereby one force would always imply another counter-force and the ring of self-inhibiting capacities requires disinhibition. The animal is still thought on the basis of a metaphysics of drive and inhibition, even if Dasein has been released into the structure of Care and its ownmost possibility.



What the 1931 course on Aristotle's concept of *dynamis* has achieved is to release living nature itself from the vestiges of vitalism and the economic exchange of driven behaviour which it implies. This is done not by disowning the concept of force altogether in favour of something like structures of meaning; what Merleau-Ponty will call 'planes of significance' or 'forms of unity'.<sup>68</sup> Rather, force is found to be in itself and not only in its relation to conversance, a range which always coincides exactly with a range of withdrawal. Living capacities are finite in themselves and thus do not require inhibition, whether by external resistance or by internal structures of restraint. The very path which a living being negotiates across the terrain of its capacity excludes other paths and requires that the terrain itself is provisionally circumscribed. What Heidegger now achieves is a withdrawal from the structure of behaviour itself. Not a disowning of all structure but a discovery of a withdrawal within force-being. This withdrawal is immanent to living capacities, even those without the remarkable relation to their own range of possibility which results from conversant force or capability. Living capacities are not always already on their way to actualisation, nor is the range of capacity itself an

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68 Merleau-Ponty was perhaps too quick to disavow the concept of force in his discovery of the structures of behaviour. His 'transcendental naturalism' is also built upon a division of various 'orders' or levels of behaviour which almost exactly mirrors the systematic divisions made by Husserl in *Ideen* II. As 'planes of signification' these orders are then all to be understood upon the basis of final 'completed form' in human consciousness, see. *The Structure of Behaviour*, trans. Alden L. Fisher (Pittsburg: Duquesne University Press, 1983) p.201. Merleau-Ponty's analysis already supposes a reversal in the order of explanation, but one which fails to open the dimension of 'force-being.' Thus, whilst the elaboration of 'vital structures' works against the possibility of comprehending living nature completely in terms of laws or as an 'absolute economy,' it does not do so on the basis of opening the dimension of 'living capacity' as the being of living beings. Whether Merleau-Ponty later moves closer to Heidegger's view, for example in the *The Visible and the Invisible* is open to debate. The influence of Husserlian 'orders' of nature is certainly still to be discerned in many of his later works.



'actual' range mapped out in advance of the traversals themselves. They do not have the kind of conversant reticence which the manifest range of capability can rely upon, but capacity itself is finite and does not need inhibition to prevent it from explosively actualising its entire range of capacity at once.

The need for the discovery of the withdrawal within living capacity is just as necessary today, when general dynamics has made nature as a whole into the bearer of a drive into the 'adjacent possible' of greater and greater complexity. If nature itself is driven to an ever greater development of itself from out of itself with no capacity to bear these developments, to withdraw from actualisation, then it will no longer be able to bear and sustain its own infinite productions. If, on the other hand, the forces of nature are enveloped in a withdrawal which is negotiated by actualisations at the same time and precisely because they are developing and actualising themselves, then perhaps life can be borne by nature as it is born within nature. This withdrawal is only discovered in the whole spectrum of *dynamis* when that spectrum itself is opened up by a *logos* which is no longer the exclusive property of Dasein, although Dasein maintains a peculiar and specific kind of capability through its conversance. When this ecology of force is made visible in all its diversity by a gathering and enjoining *logos*, then the withdrawal and finitude of a dynamic ecology can begin to be appreciated. An ecology which would make possible the withdrawal that remains unheeded in the always already actualised productivity and exchange of the economy of nature.

Finally, Heidegger's spectrum of *dynamis* gathers the forces of nature, the capacities of life and the capabilities of human beings together with the force of art, violent force and divine power. It escapes the threefold structure of the constitution of the physical,

animal and spiritual, an order and structure of nature which Husserl imported into phenomenology in *Ideas II*, and a pattern also reproduced by the early Merleau-Ponty in *The Structure of Behaviour* as 'Physical, Vital, and Human Orders'. The spectrum of *dynamis* is not held together by analogy, nor is it a hierarchical order constituted in a transcendental consciousness. The spectrum is held together by a *logos* that is not a universal or general concept that subsumes particulars under its rule. *Dynamis* is at once dispersed and gathered together by this *logos*. All force adheres to it in its own withdrawal and inner finitude. Thus the discovery of this spectrum, which frees living nature into a finitude denied to it by its captivation in the economy of nature, now brings us directly to the questions of domination and power over nature which will quite naturally become one of Heidegger's central concerns throughout the coming decade.

## Chapter 3

### The Power of the Earth and The Technicised Animal

Wir müssen nicht nur die Erde, sondern auch Thiere und Pflanzen für den Übermenschen bereit machen.<sup>69</sup>

Friedrich Nietzsche

We have moved from a phenomenological encounter with living beings into what may appear to be far more abstract reflections on Aristotle's metaphysics of life. This became necessary because Heidegger's initial attempt to develop a phenomenology of living beings left him with a set of problems revolving around the concept of *dynamis*, suggesting a return to Aristotle's thinking of living force. It may still seem unlikely that Heidegger would be able to fully address these problems by turning to the concept of *dynamis* as presented in the *Metaphysics*. A more straightforward course would run through those Aristotelian which deal explicitly with animality and living nature. However, I think it has been shown that Heidegger has those texts, particularly *De Anima*, fully in view during the course of the 1931 lectures on force. He uses them to illuminate passages from the *Metaphysics*, but more importantly he shows through his interpretation of the first three chapters of book Θ that Aristotle's phenomenology of life is far more powerful than a simple taxonomic categorisation of living beings would

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69 Kritische Studienausgabe, Vol.10, p.202

“We must make not only the earth, but also animals and plants ready for the overmen.”



suggest.

Nevertheless, although this return to the *Metaphysics* initiates an attempt to tackle the problems that were thrown up by the phenomenology of living nature, the results have not been unambiguous. Heidegger hints at an understanding of life that will provide a path of withdrawal from life understood as the striving of actualised drives. Yet his own understanding of living nature seemed to remain faithful to Aristotle at the moment when the realm of *dynamis* is reinserted into the realm of life understood as instinctual drives. Whether or not Aristotle's thinking of life can ultimately be employed to address the problems of evolution and genesis which were thrown up in 1929/30, Heidegger certainly shows that Aristotle's texts remain on a crossroad when it comes to the modern relation to living nature. They are embedded in the constant struggle of actualised drives but they can also provide us with possibilities for another beginning for living nature.

After a decade of intensive engagement and interpretation Heidegger now began to move away from Aristotle. There are undoubtedly a multitude of reasons which could be provided to account for this. Between 1931 and 1935, the point at which we will now pick up the tread of living nature again, what had not changed? Rather than provide any detailed biographical or historiographical account I will continue to pursue the question which occupies us here: Once our thinking of the capacities of living nature has been located within the spectrum of *dynamis*, how does the more extreme range of the spectrum, the violent force, power and domination which are also to be found within the spectrum come to bear upon and transform life itself? In that question historical and political terrors do not remain a troublesome contextual concern, but must be immediately confronted in our thinking of ecology.

We have reached a point at which Heidegger abandons a project which had sustained his philosophy and thus this thinking of living nature at the end of the Twenties. He abandons this project or perhaps he is abandoned by it. I already mentioned that his immersion in Aristotle's philosophy becomes less encompassing. He now departs from his 'phenomenological decade'. Most importantly for our purposes however, he abandons a project which *Being and Time* left us with, a project which only lasted a few crucial years but which opened his philosophising to a necessity that it may otherwise never have come upon. It is the project which he occasionally named 'Metontology'. That was the attempt to begin fundamental ontology, an ontology of the understanding of being, with an interrogation of beings, an interrogation which Dasein makes possible but which is not completed in the analysis of Dasein. It is this project what allows Heidegger to attempt a revitalisation and radicalisation of metaphysics in *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics* and above all it is this project which allowed metaphysics to turn towards a phenomenology of living nature.

We cannot and must not simply abandon metaphysics. Without it the question of living nature cannot be posed in its philosophical dimension. But at the crucial moment metaphysics may abandon us. Not simply leaving us with problems which its conceptual frameworks cannot but perpetuate, but worse still, leaving us with no problems and succeeding in dissolving all its own problems. At the moment we are abandoned by metaphysics- by the questioning of beings as such and as a whole, which Heidegger comes to name the 'guiding question,' an interpretation of being which takes its lead from beings- then we are left with a decision. To abandon ourselves and any question of an appropriate relation to living nature in turn, or to retrieve the question which metaphysics posed in the midst of our abandonment.



If metaphysics has been the metaphysics of life, when our thought is abandoned by metaphysics, can we still think living nature? Can we begin to think living nature, perhaps not for the first time, but beginning otherwise?

### **§11 What Does it Mean to Orientate Oneself in Thinking the Earth?**

Nature thought otherwise, another nature rather than a second nature, that is what is at stake in Heidegger's return to *physis* and his development of the concept of earth. Despite the abandonment of metaphysics, it can still lead us to a point at which we can launch this other project. One of these leads is the spectrum of *dynamis* which we began to analyse in the previous chapter. So far I have concentrated on the juxtaposition of the first three bands of the spectrum: forces of nature; capacities of living beings and capabilities of human beings. Yet in order to gain a full understanding of what Heidegger brings into play here we should now turn towards the final three bands: art, violent force and power. This will not lead us away from our chosen inquiry since the spectrum, it will be recalled, is not a table of categories. Each band in the spectrum is held in a unity, not bound by a general definition, but in a joining which is played out between the bands. Thus, in order to fully understand the place of living capacities we must present the entire spectrum. In any case, it may already appear somewhat strange that human 'capabilities' should be distinguished from art or violent force, as though they did not also pertain to man. Or that divine power should be left out on its own, as though such power does not work through all the other bands of the spectrum. In fact, Heidegger has no wish to deny that art or violent force pertain to man, although they may not be possessions of man in any straightforward sense. Nor does divine power remain at the end of the spectrum, working a singularly creative or retro-active power over the earthly powers. Art (*Kunst*), violent force (*Gewalt*) and power (*Macht*) form a



triad of *dynamis* driven to the extreme, *dynamis* which threatens to shatter the domains or horizons which natural force (*Kraft*), living capacity (*Fähigkeit*) and human capability (*Vermögen*) inhabited each in their own way. It is on these forces, brought into play within nature yet driving it beyond itself, always threatening to push them beyond their own possibility, that Heidegger concentrates all his effort in the late Thirties.

To begin with, there are two key texts delivered as academic and public lectures in 1935 and 1936, concerned with art and with violent force. *The Origin of the Work of Art* brings the concept of earth to the forefront of Heidegger's thinking for the first time. The lecture course *Introduction to Metaphysics* provides an interpretation of the Greek *Physis* in terms of the prevailing (*walten*) of nature, the violent force (*Gewalt*) of this prevailing and of the human encounter with this violence.<sup>70</sup> Both of these texts have

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70 I begin with the potentiality of art and the power of the earth as this follows the line of presentation of the dynamic spectrum set out in the previous chapter and because the concept of 'earth' allows us to orientate ourselves with regard to the range of issues which are now at stake, before moving on to a more detailed analysis of the violence of *physis* and of human being. The precise date of the first draft of 'The Origin of the Work of Art' is unclear, but it seems to have been written just after *Introduction to Metaphysics* in 1935. Jacques Taminiaux, basing his reading on a second draft from 1935 that was published in an unauthorised edition in France in 1987, argues that there is already a considerable move away from the violent tone of the 1935 lectures, that echoed the *Introduction to Metaphysics*, in the final published version in 1936. See, Jacques Taminiaux, *Heidegger and the Project of Fundamental Ontology*, trans. and ed. Michael Gendre (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991) pp.213-226. For a reading which sees all three versions as attempts to wrest the thinking of art away from *technē*, *poiēsis* and a *logos* modelled on human language, but does not see a move away from the 'strife' which pertains to the truth of the work of art itself, see Miguel de Beistegui, *Thinking with Heidegger: Displacements* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003) pp.126-138. In what follows I make no attempt to settle this debate. I concentrate on the final version of the lectures, which

provided rich material for commentators wishing to draw out the potential of Heidegger's work for environmental philosophy. On the other hand, both have raised concern amongst those who feel that Heidegger deals in a cursory way with living beings. I think it can be shown that what may appear to be dogmatic statements concerning the 'worldhood' of plants and animals are better understood as a recapitulation of the previous thinking of animality in terms of a captivating ring of capacity, which is now driven beyond its own possibility at the extremes of the spectrum of *dynamis*.

Although the earth first gained prominence as a counterpoint to world in *The Origin of the Work of Art*, its presence can be felt 'towering through' the world much earlier.<sup>71</sup> The immediate context for the development of the concept of earth in 1935 is the thinking of *physis* in *Introduction to Metaphysics* and the role played by earth in Hölderlin's Hymns "Germania" and "The Rhine," which Heidegger interpreted in a lecture course from 1934/35. But the earth made an important appearance more than a decade before this in his course on *The Fundamental Concepts of Aristotelian Philosophy* (1924). There the earth is not so much a 'counter-concept' to world, but forms part of an exploration of Dasein's Being-in-the-World as a 'natural world'. The 'natural world' is not a part or region of the total world, but is the whole world itself as it appears under a particular

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I think should be seen as part of an ongoing attempt not to move away from the overwhelming experience of violence described in the *Introduction to Metaphysics*, but to overturn it and reorientate it at root.

71 In his introduction to the essay Hans-Georg Gadamer recalls that the original lectures caused a 'philosophical sensation' as the counter-concept of earth came to prominence alongside the familiar concept of world. Yet for Gadamer himself, familiar as he was with Heidegger's early courses on Aristotle, it should perhaps not have come as such a surprise. Hans-Georg Gadamer 'Zur Einführung' in Martin Heidegger, *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1960) pp. 93-114

aspect. The characteristic aspect of the 'natural world' is that it appears as '*always-already-there*' (*Immer-schon-Da*). The world always appears within an environing-world under its natural aspect of 'always-already-there' and at the same time can 'also always be other' (GA 18, 266). It is at this point that Heidegger introduces the earth:

The properly-always-in-being (*Eigentlich-immer-Seiende*), which does not need to be sought for long in the natural orientation of the world is the sky. The Greek sky and world must be understood as a vault on which the sun comes up and goes down. The practical concerns of men are played out in the centre, in the *meson*. The earth is the centre of orientation in the world. Such orientation does not yet need to be at all theoretical, nor pertaining to natural science. This system of orientation is something absolute. There is nothing from whence my Dasein could be relative. There is only a Dasein, that Dasein on the earth as the absolute centre of orientation.

(GA 18, 266)

The sky is a world of natural beings always already there. The earth allows Dasein to orient itself in the world. Together they form an absolute system of orientation which orients us as beings in the world. It need not pertain to natural science, but any theoretical practise must also orient itself around the earth. Heidegger attributes this concept of the earth to Greek Dasein and uses it to explain certain aspects of Aristotle's cosmology. Nevertheless, we may well be reminded of various attempts to develop a phenomenological concept of the 'earth,' in particular that of the later Husserl. Husserl famously suggests that phenomenologically speaking, in contrast to the entire



orientation of modern astronomy and physics, perhaps the earth does not move after all. Perhaps the *orientation* of modern physics is only possible if the earth does not move. Then, of course, the 'earth' cannot be identified with the planet earth. Nor is it some other being besides the planet earth. The earth moves and does not move. It moves because it stays in place.<sup>72</sup>

Certainly the concept of earth which appears in Heidegger's Hölderlin lectures and then in the work of art essay is very different to that earlier hybrid of the Greek and phenomenological earth. It is very far indeed from an 'absolute centre of orientation'. Nevertheless, the earth does still provide and in turn require a certain orientation for Dasein. In fact, the introduction of an earth which is no longer simply to be reached through the world, or world under a particular aspect, but is rather in constant strife with the world, requires a re-orientation of Dasein, which can no longer rely upon any absolute centre of orientation. Heidegger still holds on to the thought that the earth cannot appear in its own right, it must appear in and through a world. But the earth now gains a certain density of its own, it appears in a world, but as a counter-movement to all worldly appearance. Thus, the work of art allows the earth to appear in a world, and not only form an invisible background or point for orientation, but it appears as earth, refusing to give itself up completely to the world: 'The work moves the earth into the open of a world and holds it there. *The work lets the earth be an earth.*' (OBT, 24/35)

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72 Edmund Husserl, 'Foundational Investigation of the Phenomenological Origin of the Spatiality of Nature', trans. Fred Kersten, in Husserl, *Shorter Works*, ed. Peter McCormick and Frederick Elliston (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981) pp. 223-226. See also Martin Heidegger, *What is a Thing?* (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1967) p.85. See also, Juha Himanka, 'Does the earth move? A search for a dialogue between two traditions in contemporary philosophy' in *The Philosophical Forum* Vol.XXXI, No.1, 2000 pp.57-83

What then is the earth, if it is no longer the centre of orientation in the natural world? In his important study *The Song of the Earth* Michel Haar identifies four 'senses' of the earth as it appears in the *The Origin of the Work of Art* and other texts of this period.<sup>73</sup> Firstly, the earth is associated with *lēthē*. That is, the earth participates in truth understood as *alētheia*, as the concealed which is unconcealed in truth. Secondly, the earth is associated with nature itself, or more accurately with what the Greeks called *physis*, the coming-forth and standing-forth of beings as a whole. Thirdly, the earth as it appears in the essay on the work of art is associated with what might be called the 'material' of the work. Fourthly, the earth is understood as the 'homeland earth' (*heimatliche Erde*). Finally, Haar suggests that all four 'senses' can be seen as unified under the thought of a 'foundationless foundation'. This then becomes the key thesis of Haar's work: the earth seems to offer itself as a kind of foundationless foundation which can found all of the epochs of history which Heidegger develops as the 'history of being'. It is not so much a trans-historical principle as a nonhistorical groundless ground.

Haar's analysis provides an invaluable starting point for any attempt to understand the significance of the earth in Heidegger's later thought. However, I think that we can pose a set of questions on the basis of this analysis, not amounting to a refutation, but pointing towards areas in need of further exploration. These questions are formulated on the basis of texts which form the context of *The Origin of the Work of Art*. In *Contributions to Philosophy (From Ereignis)* in particular, many reflections which were spurred by ideas first formulated in the work of art essay, were not published until after Haar completed his study. The following questions, then, seek to bring those reflections

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<sup>73</sup> Michel Haar, *The Song of the Earth*, trans. Reginald Lilly, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993) pp.57-64



to bear upon Haar's formulations.

The earth has a quality of darkness and self-enclosure, opposed to the openness of the world, which puts it in league with the *lēthē* of *alētheia*. In fact, one is tempted to suggest that the strife of world and earth as presented in *The Origin of the Work of Art* maps directly on to the dis-closure of *a-lētheia*. Yet, we have already seen that when the earth comes into the open in a work of art it is not fully disclosed in that openness, but is held there as earth. In *Contributions to Philosophy* Heidegger will develop this sheltering of the earth into a distinguishing feature of truth in 'another beginning'. That truth would be truth which is prepared by a retrieval of truth as *a-lētheia*, but it would not itself be the truth of the Greeks. *A-lētheia* as dis-closure has already decided upon a certain path for truth:

*a-lētheia* means unconcealment and the unconcealed itself. This already shows that concealing itself is only experienced as that which is to be *abolished*, what must be taken away (a-)

(CP, 245/351)

*Lēthē* is a concealing and self-enclosure, but one which has already been prepared for disclosure, which stands ready for its own abolition. In this way truth has already been set on the path towards the annihilation of the enclosure which stands in need of disclosure, the natural light which attempts to penetrate to the very core of the earth. The truth of 'another beginning' would be, 'an essentially different projecting-open than *alētheia*, although this projecting open belongs to the remembering of *alētheia*' (CP,



245/351). That truth would be a 'clearing *for* concealing' (my emphasis). No longer a *lēthē* which stands ready for unconcealment, but a clearing which is experienced as the sheltering of concealment. Thus the 'grounding' of another beginning is experienced as a 'sheltering-concealing' (*Bergung*). The world is not swallowed up into the darkness of the earth, but the world is *re-orientated* towards the earth. If this reorientation is not taken into account then the identification of earth with *lēthē* could be misleading.

Our reservations concerning the second sense of the earth, the sense of *physis*, run along similar lines. Certainly, the notion of earth is introduced in the closest proximity to *physis*. In *The Origin of the Work of Art* Heidegger writes: 'Early on, the Greeks called this coming forth and rising up into itself of all things *Physis*. At the same time *physis* lights up that upon which man bases his dwelling. We call this the *earth*.' (OBT, 21/31) The earth, like *physis*, contains the sense of all being as a coming forth from out of itself and standing forth into a world. The concern is that nature thought in such a way would, like the *lēthē* of *alētheia*, be implicitly understood as that which always only awaits its own unfolding and bringing-forth into the light of a world. The earth would then be in danger of becoming that which awaits its own abolition in a world. Admittedly, Heidegger is always at pains to point out that the 'strife' of world and earth is of mutual necessity to each. The earth could not do without world. In the *Introduction to Metaphysics* he already writes that: '*Physis* is the event of *standing forth*, arising from the concealed and thus enabling the concealed to take its stand for the first time.' (IM, 16/12) *Physis*, the movement of unconcealing, allows the concealed the stand forth for the first time. We can see here that a complex relation between *alētheia* and *physis* is being working out, which complicates the 'senses' of the earth. The earth could not, for example, simply be identified with *lēthē* or with *physis*. *Lēthē*, the concealed, plays its

own role in Heidegger's understanding of *physis*. The way that this role is now played out can only confirm our suspicion that the movement of *physis* appears to be orientated towards the the standing-forth of beings. *Physis* is predominantly the unfolding of itself into the world. It may also fold back into itself, but this would seem to come as a secondary and derivative moment of decay in the *physis* of the first beginning. It could all too easily become simply a 'condition' of unfolding. To think the earth would not simply be to think *physis* amongst other things, but to reorient ourselves towards *physis* and even to reorient *physis* towards itself. The question from which such a re-orientation would set out thus reads: how can the concealed take a stand for the first time in the *standing forth* of *physis*, without ultimately becoming the standing reserve of concealment, awaiting only its own abolition in truth?

Furthermore, Heidegger makes a claim which should give us further pause before straightforwardly ascribing *physis* to the 'senses' of the earth:

World is 'earthy' (of the earth), earth is of the world. Earth is in one sense *more originary* than nature, because it is bound to history.

(CP, 193/275)

It is true that Heidegger also frequently argues that what the Greeks understood by *physis* was 'more originary' than everything that came later under the sign of 'nature'. Yet he usually argues this point on the basis that *physis* never referred to a particular region of beings, *physis*, never stands over against grace, or history, or technology. In so far as all of these dichotomies are formed by contrast to nature, nature still holds a



certain 'priority,' but has forgotten the realm in which these distinctions must be formulated. (PM, 183-184/309-311) That the 'earth' should now be characterised as 'bound to history' does not mean that in this notion a reconciliation or even contamination occurs between nature and history. The earth is not historical in the sense that we come to realise that what appeared to a be natural landscapes or habitats have been shaped by a history, which almost inevitably includes the influence of man upon the environment. The earth is historical because it is a concept which can only appear from out of the midst of and at the end of the 'history of beyng,' the history of the forgetting and abandonment of being. *Physis* could never be historical in this way, because, as the Greek experience of nature naturing, it stands at the origin of the 'first beginning'. *Physis* is not only unhistorical because it is nature before nature splits itself into nature and history. It is unhistorical because it stands at the origin of the history of nature.

The third 'sense' of earth, according to Haar, can be characterised as that which would previously have been called the 'material' of a work of art. The material is the source of the potentiality of the art work. It is into this sense of the earth which we would need to inquire in order to discover precisely how art comes into its own in the spectrum of *dynamis*. It is not my intention to pursue this question in detail here, since I am now concerned only to investigate how the breadth of the spectrum impacts upon Heidegger's understanding of living nature and Dasein's relation to living beings. However, certain questions would have to be addressed by an investigation attempting to place the specific potentiality of art within this spectrum. Firstly, does the earthy character of the work, its 'materiality,' restrict the potentiality of the work within a certain range or horizon? We saw in the previous chapter that material force, living



capacity and human capability are all held within a specific, although not fixed and unchanging, horizon. Does the materiality of an art work hold the work within a specific horizon and if so, what relation does the work hold to its own horizon? Secondly, does the horizon of 'artistic force' vary according with the material of the work? If so, does the variation follow the lines of common taxonomies, or could it be the case, for instance, that the material aspect of a certain language could hold a poem within an horizon of force which was closer to that of a wood carving than the carving itself was to a statue shaped from marble? Finally, what sense are we to make of the 'materiality' of the work, in the context of an essay which sets out to dismantle the metaphysical dichotomy of matter and form, *hyle* and *idea*? However much we insist that the earth is not the empty or indeterminate potentiality which is usually ascribed to *hyle*, are we not in danger of re-inscribing this pure indeterminacy into the materiality of the earth? What is the sense of 'materiality' beyond matter and form? What is the sense of this material 'sense' of the earth? Only by addressing these questions in detail could the place of art in the spectrum of *dynamis* be determined. With that, the 'strife of world and earth' might be found to be only a starting point for the determination of artistic force.

The fourth sense of the earth is perhaps its most treacherous territory. The earth as homeland is also the sense which Heidegger most directly appropriates from Hölderlin. Yet from the very moment that he takes up this theme Heidegger gives it an unexpected meaning:

Homeland (*Heimat*)- not simply as the place of birth, nor as the familiar landscape, but rather *as the power of the earth (Macht der Erde)*, upon which man at each time, each according to his historical Dasein, "poetically

dwells"... The land lies full of expectation under the stormy heavens, the whole of homely nature lies in the surrounding shadows that have descended. In such a homeland man first experiences himself as belonging to the earth. He does not make it serviceable to his attunements in accordance with empathy, but rather the other way around: from here he can first experience that his individual I-ness (*Ichheit*), which first of all sets itself over against everything, so that it only takes it as an object of its own grace and to fill out its lived experiences, comes to nothing.

(GA 39, 88)

The experience of the power of the earth as homeland might be an experience of belonging to a particular stretch of land, as in this case the overpowering storm marks out a stretch of shadowy land with which Dasein is now attuned in expectation. But this means that I never belong to one stretch of land once and for all. Through the power of the earth I can become attuned to any landscape in a multitude of ways, not only through a bare familiarity. Through the power of the earth my homeland is not indeterminately 'the whole world,' but through my homeland I belong to the earth and not just a stretch of territory.

Not only that, but the power of the earth can be overpowering. It can explode even the horizon of my 'ownmost possibility'. The homeland earth (*heimatliche Erde*) will not allow us to rest peacefully in the security of our own enclave upon the earth, but demands that we encounter what is most strange and alienating. Heidegger's interpretations of Hölderlin's poetry will continue to emphasise this theme, especially in

the 1942 lecture course *Hölderlin's hymn: "The Ister"*, where the movement of Hölderlin's 'river hymns' is understood as a 'becoming homely, on the ground of being unhomely,' a movement which binds the being of the river and being of man in their mutual attunement. Haar himself is well aware of the uncanny aspect of a 'homeland earth' and he is also quite clear that this homeland does not amount to anything like place of birth or nationality. The final chapter of *The Song of the Earth* is a brilliant development of this theme, putting Hölderlin into dialogue with Saint-John Perse.<sup>74</sup> Nevertheless, it remains questionable whether Haar is correct to emphasise the 'adoption' of the earth as homeland, even if it is a dwelling which, 'keeps asking to be chosen, adopted.'<sup>75</sup> One does not appropriate the native earth to oneself. Rather, as evidenced by Heidegger's thinking of the homeland earth above, the earth appropriates us, bringing the 'I' which would prefer simply to enjoy its earthly lived experience whilst trying to secure it and make it its own, to nothing.

We are left with the final 'unifying' sense of the earth as 'foundationless foundation'. Here it is not so much a question of doubting the decisive importance of such a notion. The 'abyssal ground' is a notion at the heart of Heidegger's reflections in and surrounding *Contributions to Philosophy*. What is questionable is whether abyssal ground can be taken as the unifying sense of the earth. Any 'unifying sense' is in danger

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74 Unfolding the full political and philosophical implications of the 'homeland earth' would take us beyond our current concerns. For further reflections on the topic see for example, Miguel de Beistegui *Heidegger and the Political: Dystopias*, (London: Routledge, 1998), Chapter Four "The Free Use of the National" and William McNeill, 'Heimat: Heidegger and the Threshold' in *Heidegger towards the Turn: Essays on the Work of the 1930s* ed. James Risser (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999) pp.319-349

75 Michel Harr, *The Song of the Earth: Heidegger and the Grounds of the History of Being*, trans. Reginald Lilly (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1993) p.63



of reinstating a taxonomic procedure which it is unlikely that the earth can bare. As with the dimension of thought which I have named the 'spectrum of *dynamis*,' the unity must arise from within the dimension of sense, not from a unifying sense. At most a 'guiding sense' can lead us into the dimension which is to be held open and explored. A definition will only close that dimension in on itself, but will not shelter what remains concealed, since it claims to open up every possibility for our inspection.

In the context of Heidegger's 'history of beyng,' we may need to reconsider Haar's central claim. If the earth as 'foundationless foundation' is the abyssal ground of all historical epochs, then the earth is indeed in a sense 'bound to history'. In another sense, as Haar suggests, it is itself nonhistorical, although it only comes into its own in history. What Haar may indirectly be pointing us towards is a re-orientation of man towards the earth and above all of beyng towards its own earthiness. The earth would then not only stand as the abyssal ground of the history of the abandonment of beyng, but could be reorientated towards another history. A history which is truly *of beyng* as that which withdraws and not only the history of withdrawal. A history of the earth perhaps.

In pursuing this set of questions concerning Haar's interpretation of the earth we have mapped out some of the essential features in the terrain of the turning in beyng, a turning through metaphysics towards preparation for 'another beginning'. Before returning to the main question of this thesis, the place of animality and living nature in this terrain, we can now pursue the spectrum of *dynamis* into its final phases. The force of 'art' finds its place in the earth. The earth has the character of a power; the power of the earth attunes human existence. The characterisation of this power is now of utmost importance. We are led from the earth into the last two bands in the spectrum of

*dynamis*: violent force (*Gewalt*) and power (*Macht*). I suggested above that what characterises these forces is that they are *overwhelming*. Violent force overwhelms that which it comes up against, but it also overwhelms itself as force or potentiality, it overwhelms itself and its own horizon. It is now time to see precisely what this entails.

## §12 The Nature of Violence and the Violation of Nature

The violent tropes in Heidegger's thinking of the work of art are well known. World and earth are in strife, the world opening the earth into unconcealment, the earth 'towering through' the world, showing itself as that which refuses to be entirely disclosed. The 'ground plan' or sketch of the work (*Riß*) is at the same time a rip or tear (*Riß*), by virtue of which truth as unconcealment is set into the work. In order to uncover the roots of this violence and to see precisely how it has been acted out against living nature we must depart from this orientating sketch of the power of the earth and the transformations which it initiates and return to Heidegger's interpretation of the first choral ode in Sophocles' *Antigone* in 1935.<sup>76</sup>

<sup>76</sup> There has been considerable debate over the significance of the differences between Heidegger's first reading of this ode in 1935 (GA 40) and his second reading in 1942 (GA 53). Miguel de Beistegui offers a comparison of the two readings in which he highlights the shift towards a more purely 'ontological' reading in 1942. This shift, whilst tending to alleviate some of the more disturbing aspects of the first reading, also seems to have a tendency to prevent the concrete reflection on acts of violence which the more onto-ontological reading kept alive. The second reading nevertheless still presents us with a confrontation between technical mastery and a strife-fueled poetic thinking. See, Miguel de Beistegui, *Heidegger and the Political: Dystopias* (London: Routledge, 1998). Clare Pearson Geiman, on the other hand, suggests that an even more radical break takes place between the two readings. She argues that in his second reading Heidegger has left behind the 1935 thinking of poetry as part of an essentially violent opening of the world for precisely the opposite, a responsibility that is 'fundamentally non-violent'. Interestingly, the crux of Geiman's interpretation is the thought that



*Introduction to Metaphysics* sets out to recover the fullest sense of *physis*, as the prevailing of being itself. Heidegger opens the course by attempting to find something disconcerting in the familiar question of metaphysics: Why are there beings at all instead of nothing? He then discusses the etymology of the word 'being' and considers whether there is an 'essence of being' which prevails throughout all the vastly diverse meanings of this word. The second half of the lecture course is then used to trace what he describes as a 'concealed history' of being (IM, 97/70). This is in fact the first draft of many attempts to tell this concealed history. Here the history takes the form of

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between the two readings Heidegger has come to rehabilitate spatiality and locality as fundamentally irreducible to temporality and is thus no longer able to identify being with power. See, Clare Pearson Geiman, 'Heidegger's Antigone's' in *A Companion of Heidegger's 'Introduction to Metaphysics'* ed. Richard Polt and Gregory Fried (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001) pp.161-182, p.174. It seems to me, however, that Geiman goes too far when she sees in the more elaborate discussion of the three meanings of *to deinon* in the second reading only a 'nod' towards the first reading. Power and violence are still central meanings here, even if they are not as all pervasive as in 1935 (See footnote 80 below). There is a great deal of truth in the idea of a move away from violence, but it is more of a move *through* an experience of overwhelming violence and the disempowerment of *physis*. One cannot simply extract oneself from violence and assert non-violence when being itself has been bound to violence. As Geiman acknowledges, we can and must move towards responsibility, but we cannot do that without renewed reflection on the experience of the overwhelming and of violence. In this experience Heidegger does not seek to eliminate from philosophical understanding the potential for violence and even the potentiality of violence. He seeks to move through this overwhelming experience and reorient us within it. For further contributions to this debate see, Stephen Davis, 'The Path of Thinking, Poetizing and Building: The Strange Uncanniness of Human Being on Earth', in *Heidegger and the Earth: Essays in Environmental Philosophy*, ed Ladelle McWhorter (Kirkville: Thomas Jefferson University Press at Northern Missouri State University, 1992) pp.37-50 and Timothy Clark, *The Poetics of Singularity: The Counter-Culturalist Turn in Heidegger, Derrida, Blanchot and the later Gadamer* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005) pp.40-48



various 'restrictions of being,' as being is marked off over against some other concept in various dichotomies. These are: being and becoming; being and seeming; being and thought; being and the ought. By far the longest of these chapters is that concerned with 'being and thought'. Heidegger here struggles with the saying of Parmenides: *to gar auto noein estin te kai einai*, 'thinking and being are the same.' Quite suddenly in the midst of his commentary Heidegger breaks off. He asserts that it is difficult to approach this saying directly and that he will take a circuitous route through the first choral ode of Sophocles' *Antigone*, in order to introduce us to the Greek poetic-projection of being-human.

What follows is a very unorthodox interpretation in three stages. An interpretation which, as Heidegger himself claims, steadily increases in violence. It is a violence which the interpretation itself does not seek to justify, but to render almost inevitable. For the reading of the choral ode places being-human in the midst of an overwhelmingly violent nature as the 'violence-doer'. Sophocles' vision of being-human is inseparable from his projection of *physis* as the Overwhelming. In the midst of the manifold of the uncanny man appears as the 'most uncanny'.

If we compare Heidegger's reading of the *Antigone* ode with one which appeared several decades later, it will become apparent just how unusual Heidegger's reading is. Hans Jonas was a student of Heidegger's during the Twenties. In 1933 he fled Germany and from 1955 lived in the United States where he taught philosophy for many years. From early work on the Gnostic tradition, Jonas developed a philosophy which was critical of Heidegger's early thinking, claiming that it failed to deal adequately with the philosophical questions raised by biological life. Jonas went on to develop an 'ethics of

responsibility' in his book *The Imperative of Responsibility: In Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age*. This book was influential in the development of ecological philosophy, especially in Germany, during the Seventies and Eighties. It is therefore appropriate that we consider what Jonas has to say at a point of particular proximity to Heidegger, so that we can gain some further context for the present investigation and see precisely where Heidegger's thought can be joined to a central strand of ecological thinking and where it breaks away from and demands a reorientation of that thought.

In *The Imperative of Responsibility* Jonas sets out to explain the need for a completely new approach to ethics. He does so by suggesting that previous ethical thought has been unable to encompass the idea that the human relation to nature is subject to change and that it has therefore generally thought ethical principles as, in principle, eternal. If it can be shown that the human relation to nature has been subject to fundamental changes, then an ethics must be developed which can respond more adequately to the current situation. In his very first chapter Jonas gives an example of the human relation to nature in antiquity which has been left behind: the first choral ode of Sophocles' *Antigone*.

Neither Heidegger nor Jonas situate this choral ode in the context of the tragedy as a whole.<sup>77</sup> Rather they take it to be exemplary of the Greek understanding of human being and the then prevailing relation of man to nature. Famously this ode tells of man's relation to an inhospitable nature. It tells of his adventures on the sea and his taming of the earth. It goes on to tell of the building of cities and the institution of laws. The ode is

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77 Although in his second reading of 1942 Heidegger does take some pains to show that Antigone herself is the authentic embodiment of the 'uncanny,' in accordance with his usual reading practice this is based on a close reading of a few lines.



frequently taken as an account of how man arose from out of nature to a state of civilisation. As such it is a narrative which puts a fundamental ambiguity at the heart of 'civilisation,' because it shows its contiguity to and continuity with the violence employed to arise from out of nature with the institution of the laws of the city. As Jonas puts it, 'The raping (*Vergewaltigung*) of nature and civilising of man go hand in hand.'<sup>78</sup>

At times it is almost impossible to believe that Jonas does not have Heidegger's lecture course in mind when he turns to Sophocles.<sup>79</sup> The two readings frequently seem to be in close proximity to one another. Certainly the two thinkers are motivated to turn to the choral ode by similar concerns, not primarily historical or literary, but with the conviction that in these lines of poetry we find a clue as to man's primordial relation to nature and a point of departure for understanding our contemporary ecological condition. However, upon closer inspection the two readings diverge at crucial points. By tracing these points of divergence we will come to see that the readings as a whole are in fact very different and appreciate just how Heidegger's diagnosis of our ecological condition differs radically from widely accepted interpretations which broadly follow Jonas' reading.

The points of divergence correspond to what Heidegger names the three points of 'inner integrity' of the ode. These are the points at which Heidegger's own reading is most controversial, but which hold together his understanding of being-human for the Greeks.

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<sup>78</sup> Hans Jonas, *The Imperative of Responsibility: In Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age*, trans.

Hans Jonas with David Herr (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984) p.2

<sup>79</sup> This may even have been the case, as *Introduction to Metaphysics* was published as a separate edition before its appearance in the Collected Edition and was widely read after the war.



The first point of inner integrity is broached in the first two lines of the ode. Heidegger's translation reads:

Manifold is the uncanny, yet nothing  
uncannier than man bestirs, rising up beyond him.

(IM, 156/112)

Here man is from the very start placed in a position of ambiguous affinity with nature as a whole, whilst at one and the same time being distinguished from it. Nature is uncanny, but man is the uncanniest. Our whole understanding of this ode and consequently of human being relies upon an adequate appreciation of the uncanny. Heidegger elaborates:

The *deinon* is the terrible in the sense of the overwhelming sway (*überwältigenden Waltens*), which induces panicked fear, true anxiety, as well as collected, inwardly reverberating, reticent awe. The violent, the overwhelming is the essential character of the sway itself (*Das Gewaltige, das Überwältigende ist der Wesens-charakter des Waltens selbst*). When the sway breaks in, it *can* keep its overwhelming power to itself. But this does not make it more harmless but only *more* terrible and distant.

(IM, 159-60/114-115)

In that final characterisation of the sway of *physis* we hear an echo of the reticence

which Heidegger has been trying to recover in his interpretation of *dynamis*. The overwhelming power of *physis* need not come into effect. In stark contrast to, for example, the God of Spinoza, the power of *physis* is overwhelming, yet it is a wave which does not break on the world of beings by any natural necessity. Its power is not a power always already actualised.

On the other hand, man seems compelled to violence. This is not simply a matter of survival *against* the odds, in the face of the overwhelming violence of nature. Man is compelled to act out violence as the violence-doer to hold his own, in his very affinity with nature. Rather than having violence at his disposal, Heidegger argues that man has violence not as a trait of his 'doing' but of his very Dasein. It is not simply a matter of the various violent deeds we perform, they are only indicative of the violence which makes up our very existence. This is how Heidegger understands humanity as the 'uncanniest'. Humanity is *deinon* -uncanny- in a double sense. Firstly because it, 'remains exposed to the overwhelming sway, because it essentially belongs to being. But secondly, 'because it is violence doing in the sense we have indicated. [It gathers what holds sway and lets it enter into an openness.]' (IM, 160/114) Humanity is violent from the ground up, because it belongs to the overwhelming sway of being and because it uses violence to open up that sway to itself. These are not two violent characteristics which join in man, natural violence and violence against nature, but two facets of our violent nature which meet in our very being, making us the most uncanny. This characterisation of our being, according to Heidegger, does not simply pick us out as a particularly intense example of natural violence, but articulates our unique character as those who take up, govern and manage the overwhelming. Yet in doing so do not dominate it or bring its finitude to the fore. Human violence does not seek to tame

nature, but to goad it to ever greater expressions of its own overwhelming violence, which man can manage and channel into further provocation.

The 'uncanny' is a translation of *deinon* which Heidegger claims is not meant to cover over the terror and violence of nature and humanity.<sup>80</sup> Rather, this translation is meant to point us towards the condition in which this terror and violence arise. That is the

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80 In his second reading of this Antigone choral ode in the 1942 lecture course *Hölderlin's Hymn: The Ister* Heidegger offers an interpretation which builds upon but also significantly differs from that of 1935. In particular he offers a more complex reading of the various meanings of *to deinon* rather than focusing so quickly on human being as *to deinoteron*. The usual German translation is '*das Ungeheuere*'- the terrible, monstrous or extraordinary. In the 1935 course Heidegger does not eschew this translation (which is that given in Hölderlin's own translation of Antigone) but he already prefers '*das Unheimliche*'- the uncanny- as more encompassing. In 1942 a set of essential ambiguities are located in the uncanny itself, preceding the interpretation of human being as the most uncanny:

To summarize, we can more or less delimit the range of the *deinon* as follows. It means three things: the fearful (*das Furchtbare*), the powerful (*das Gewaltige*), the inhabital (*das Ungewöhnliche*). Each time it can be determined in opposing ways: the fearful is that which frightens, and as that which is worthy of honor; the powerful as that which looms over us, and as that which is merely violent; the inhabital as the extraordinary, and as that which is skilled in everything.

(GA 53, 64/78)

In the central ambiguity between the powerful as that which looms over us and the merely violent we may hear the echo of the passage in 1935 in which the overwhelming is said to be no less terrible because it need not actualise its power in acts of violence. In the final opposition we already hear intimations of the uncanny as it lies at the ground of being human. All of these oppositions are brought together as the 'uncanny', which is not meant as another meaning, but as the essence of *deinon* where these oppositions belong together without reconciling them with one another, nor resolving the inner tension in each meaning.



condition of beings which are thoroughly 'unhomely' (*unheimlich*): 'The unhomely does not allow us to be at home. Therein lies the over-whelming' (IM, 161/116) Nature does not allow us to live within our own limits, the horizons of our own capabilities, our natural talents and familiar customs. It overwhelms us. Strangely and terrifyingly, as we harry nature we are harried and torn away from ourselves, driven beyond our own nature. But in doing so we become most natural, for nature itself is overwhelming. Rather than a narrative which relates how humanity carved out a peaceful home for itself in the midst of a hostile nature, Heidegger perceives at the heart of this ode the being of a humanity which is ultimately unable, however hard it tries, to make itself at home in nature.

Jonas too has a sense of the overwhelming power of nature which pervades the choral ode. He presents it as the unarticulated background against which all of man's spectacular acts of daring remain just that. Nature as a whole will bear any assault. In contrast to Heidegger, however, Jonas understands the violent acts of man to be precisely the preliminary assaults which will eventually lead to a definitive domination of nature at the hands of man's relentless inventiveness. Intent upon presenting a coherent picture of an ancient relation to nature which has been outstripped, Jonas remains unable to grasp the point of transition in the choral narrative, from daring assault to the institution of law, as already implied in the ambiguity of human being thought as the most uncanny. The constitutive ambiguity of the most uncanny is at once the very being of humanity and the almost unthinkable transition which gives the lie to any narrative of progressive domestication of nature followed by domination.

This leads us to the second prominent phrase and point of inner integrity. Having

described various forays and adventures which man makes into nature and his coming into his own in language and the laws of the city, Sophocles turns towards the limits of this resourcefulness: '[R]esourceful in all, he meets nothing that is to come resourceless. A single onslaught, death, he was unable to resist by any flight.' Heidegger here reiterates the duality which man as the uncanniest has displayed in his translation of this line: 'Everywhere trying out, underway; untried, with no way out he comes to Nothing.' (IM, 157/113) Rather than laying further emphasis on man's resources, Heidegger's translation thus directly links that resourcefulness to its own integral finitude. In his being underway man comes to Nothing and in coming to Nothing he gets underway. Thus, whereas most interpretations understand Sophocles to be picking out death as the one exception against which man has no resources, Heidegger has already brought man's finitude into the very core of that resourcefulness. Death is the inner horizon of a resourcefulness which appears to have no outer limits. Through death, the capabilities of man are joined to the overwhelming sway of nature. Death does not set the final limit to man's resourcefulness but is the source of all his resources. In this way, Heidegger claims, we can come to read, 'Everywhere trying out, underway' as an interpretation of man as the most uncanny.

Later it becomes clearer what this interpretation of humanity's resourcefulness entails. In the second strophe, at the point which conventional readings identify as the crux of the entire ode, when humanity turns from assaults upon nature to its own domain in language and the laws of the city, there is no real transition and everything decisive has already come to a head. If we fail to realise this we are led, according to Heidegger, to the kind of misinterpretation in which the entire ode is understood as the tale of humanity's transition from a primitive to a cultivated state: 'The fundamental error that

underlies such ways of thinking is the opinion that the inception of history is primitive and backward, clumsy and weak. The opposite is true. The inception is what is most uncanny and mightiest.' (IM, 165/119) In such a remark we find perhaps the culmination of what is most disturbing in Heidegger's reading. It sounds a note of primitivism which is all too easily identified with the dominant ideology of the time. Yet this disavowal of modernity's superiority is perhaps in the final analysis not a moment of counter-point to enlightenment, but to be found at its very inception. Perhaps there is no crisis of modernity, but rather modernity itself is a condition of crisis that calls thought to make fundamental decisions and to renew again and again the thinking of what is truly decisive. If that is the case, then despite all protestations to the contrary, Heidegger remains the most modern of thinkers and nowhere more so than in his reading of Sophocles.

Be that as it may, what is essential for Heidegger is that the transition to be made here is not from primitive beginnings to civilisation, but a turning which already takes place with the the being-human of humanity. When it comes to the resources which are supposed to 'belong' to humanity above all, we are asked to concede that they are not our sole and absolute possession, that we do not control and dominate them, even as they are our own and make us out as those who we are:

The extent to which humanity is not at home in its own essence is betrayed by the opinion human beings cherish of themselves as those who have invented language and understanding, building and poetry.

How is humanity ever supposed to have invented that which pervades it in



its sway, due to which humanity itself can *be* as humanity in the first place?...The word *edidaxato* does not mean “human beings invented” but rather: they found their way into the overwhelming and therein first found themselves- the violence of those who act in this way.

(IM, 167/120)

Thus the 'inventions' of humanity are no less a part of the violence of the overwhelming than the sea, earth and animals. There is no transition from nature to culture, but a turning within nature in which man disposes of overwhelming violent forces. The reason that this remains unrecognised is nothing to do with the pride or hubris of humanity, but with the very consequences of this same dispensation of violence. As it creates routes in the overwhelming it, begets in itself its own un-essence (*Un-wesen*). This poetic projection of being sets limits for itself from which it then has no way out. (IM, 169/121) Thus, ironically, human beings reveal themselves as the most uncanny just at that point when they feel themselves to be most in control of their own clever 'inventions'.

For Jonas the transition from 'man in nature' to 'man in the city' remains the real turning point of this poetic projection. Not only that, but this turning marks a decisive turning away from nature, which then formed a background from out of which man could carve out his own domain of laws and change, under the apprehension that this would never harm the eternal and unchanging order of nature:

The immunity of the whole, untroubled in its depth by the importunities of

man, that is, the essential immutability of Nature as the cosmic order, was indeed the backdrop to all of mortal man's enterprises, including his intrusions into that order itself.<sup>81</sup>

Thus, for Jonas, nature was thought to be essentially invulnerable until only very recently. We are now finally beginning to realise that our power of domination has reached such a height, through the ever extended influence of our technological acts, that nature as a whole might be vulnerable after all. A new ethic of responsibility is required to curb our ever increasing domination of nature, whereas before the domain of ethics remained safely locked inside the city.

Heidegger's understanding of this history is in stark contrast to Jonas'. For him the *physis* of the Greeks was never an eternal cosmic order, but an overwhelming sway of violent forces. The city was not carved out against the overwhelming, but was something which humanity instituted by shattering itself against the overwhelming. Thus, the condition of ecological crisis in the literal sense is not something which we come to by means of a wayward and shortsighted pride, but rather it has been inscribed in our being-human right from the inception of this first beginning.

Finally, Heidegger's third significant phrase can now be understood in this light. Towards the end of the fifth strophe man is said to dwell high in the city if he obeys the laws of earth and gods and to be cast out of the city for his daring if he does not. However, Heidegger again takes up the juxtaposition of opposites in an interpretation of humanity's position not between contrasting moments or results, but as in itself thoroughly ambiguous:

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<sup>81</sup> op.cit p.3

Between the ordinance of the earth and the  
god's sworn dispensation (*Fug*) he fares.  
Rising high over the site, losing the site  
is he for whom what is not, is, always,  
for the sake of daring.

(IM, 157/113)

Heidegger highlights the juxtaposition of *hypsipolis apolis*, which would usually be understood as 'rising in the city' and 'without city'. He refuses the translation of *polis* as city. Rather, the 'site' is said to be the gathering point of the historical force of humanity, that is, of all creators, as creators do violence as dispensators of the overwhelming violence of nature. *Dikē*, which is usually understood to mean justice and as such the highest achievement of the city, becomes a 'fitting dispensation' (*Fug*). *Dikē* as fitting-enjoining, a fugue or joint, and the *site* at which this takes place is led back into and found in the inception of nature, something which will have become even more strongly emphasised by the time of Heidegger's second reading of the ode in 1942. In fact, this interpretation of *dikē* will feature heavily in many of Heidegger's readings of the Greeks, especially the Pre-socratics, in the following years. Everything of importance is already lost if we fail to take from Heidegger's reading of Sophocles the point that the resourceful 'arts' of *technē* and the justice of *dikē* are not inventions of humanity and in the end they do not belong to human beings, but human beings belong to them from the inception of this particular turning in the overwhelming of nature itself. *Technē* and *dikē* are in strife in the being of *physis*:



Thus, the *deinon* as the overwhelming (*dikē*) and the *deinon* as the violence-doing (*technē*) stand over against each other, although not as two present-at-hand things. This over-against consists, instead, in the fact that *technē* breaks out against *dikē*, which for its part, as fittingness, has all *technē* at its disposal. The reciprocal over-against is. It is, only insofar as the uncanniest, Being-human, happens- insofar as humanity essentially unfolds as history.

(IM, 171/123)

There is thus a strife of *technē* and *dikē* in being which prefigures, but does not match exactly, the strife of world and earth which will break out in lectures on the work of art in the following year. Justice is not the highest achievement of a canny cleverness, but in violent strife and only in this strife does it come to be. *This justice* only comes into its own in *this poetic-projection* of being. Thus, there is no easy 'ecological' reading of this text which could champion the *justice* of nature against the *violence* of technology. Nevertheless, this thinking of violence in and against nature forms a launch pad for a line of thought which, I contend, will indeed offer much to ecological thought. The violence of this projection cannot simply be left to one side in the pursuit of a more congenial self-image. Even if Heidegger himself comes to rethink his understanding of this inception of history, it is because he sees here both the configuration which has produced this violence at the heart of nature and the possibility for another projection. But another history cannot simply turn a blind eye to the history of violence. The first step is to face the full implications of that history as something that has happened to nature and to man, rather than continuing to maintain the true hubris of thinking

ourselves as the only instigators of this violence and as those who have now brought themselves and nature under such complete control as to be able to manage our own violence as well as that of nature.

It must be added that historiographically and philologically Heidegger clearly takes some great chances in his reading. In all likelihood Jonas will frequently be found to come closer to the mark by these measures. I have followed Heidegger's reading and contrasted it to Jonas' in order to provide a sense of how Heidegger now broaches questions of ecological significance, of humanity's originary relation to nature and the violent force of a nature which overwhelms our own powers and their innermost limits, but to which he provides no easy solutions and positively rejects the founding myth of a significant proportion of environmental thought. What remains so thought provoking about Heidegger's reading, in contrast to Jonas' more conventional interpretation, is the idea that the history of ecological destruction is precisely *not* one in which human beings carved out their own niche against the forces of nature and then went on to be so successful that they dominate the earth by way of technology. Human beings may have joined themselves to the violence of nature in such a way as to 'dispose' over it, but technology is something that has happened to nature and to man in and through this joining. Another beginning might be prepared by those who are on the look out at the junction for ways to disjoin and refit that apparently fatal configuration, but it cannot be instituted by a simple decision to turn away from or restrain technology by those who feel that they have technology under control. Jonas goes on to make many intricate and illuminating analyses of the current situation, but his search for a new ethics remains caught in the illusion that we can simply institute a new ethics of responsibility if we are made aware of the essential vulnerability of nature, an illusion which stems from the

initial illusion that humanity dominates nature by means of technology, rather than nature overwhelming itself in and through the violence of the 'violence-doers'. For all the glorification of violence and 'decisionism' that Heidegger's reading in *Introduction to Metaphysics* is often accused of,<sup>82</sup> it is really Jonas' assessment of the situation which lends itself of a *decision* for change, for those who see technology as an extension of the human grasp inevitably feel that this grasp can be loosened or withdrawn at will. It is not restraint as a self-imposed limit that is called for but a turning in the very dynamic of nature. If responsibility becomes a survival imperative then it has already lost its responsiveness.

What, then, has happened to living beings in the midst of this overwhelming power of nature? Have we not left them behind as the the spectrum of *dynamis* turned from the horizon of their capacities into a violent force which seems to refuse such limits? At the very least, have not living beings been carried away in an all consuming tide which no longer provides space for a more specific inquiry into the relation between Dasein and living beings? This would certainly appear to be the case.

Indeed, philosophers who wish to show that Heidegger is unable to give a satisfactory account of animality and living beings in general frequently cite passages such as the following from *Introduction to Metaphysics*:

What does "world" mean, when we speak of the darkening of the world?

World is always *spiritual* world. The animal has no world (*Welt*), nor any

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<sup>82</sup> See, for example, Timothy Clark, *The Poetics of Singularity: The Counter-Culturalist Turn in Heidegger, Derrida, Blanchot and the later Gadamer* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005)



environment (*Umwelt*).<sup>83</sup>

(IM, 47/34)

Such formulations can indeed seem like dogmatic assertions when they are made, as here, without significant elaboration in the course of an argument which is intended to strike a very different mark than that of giving a full blown account of animality. The same is true of the following passage from *The Origin of the Work of Art*:

The stone is world-less. Similarly plants and animals have no world; they belong rather to the drivenness of given surroundings (*Umgebung*), into which have been fitted.

(OBT , 23/33-4- translation modified)

Although in a sense summarising the conclusions he had reached in his previous investigations of animality, these formulations have the effect of covering over much that was questionable and significant in those investigations. We can hardly even understand what Heidegger is trying to say from these remarks made out of context.

The living being is in a sense sacrificed to other, perhaps overwhelming, certainly more

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<sup>83</sup> See Jacques Derrida, *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby (Chicago: The University of Chicago, 1989) pp.58-72 and Matthew Calarco, 'Heidegger's Zoontology' in *Animal Philosophy: Ethics and Identity*, ed. Matthew Calarco and Peter Atterton (London: Continuum, 2004) pp.18-30

pressing, concerns in these texts. Nevertheless, there are moments in which the text reveals that the peculiar cries of those beings have not been entirely drowned out by the rising storm and swell of the overwhelming sway. Indeed, those cries may be heard anew through the vast phonographic apparatus which Heidegger will now erect in order to detect the slightest echo from being as it fades always further in retreat. The work of art, for example, is no instrument of natural history or biology, but it does seem to have the power to articulate the cries of birds and beasts:

The steadfastness of the work stands out against the surge of the tide and, in its own repose, brings out the raging of the surf. Tree, grass, eagle and bull, snake and cricket first enter their distinctive shapes and come to appearance as what they are.

(OBT, 21/ 31)

By standing out against the power of the earth, the work allows a world to appear in which living beings too can show themselves. The Greek temple, as a work, allows living beings to come forth and remain within the light which it sheds around it. The world allows living beings to stand out in their singularity. Yet we should not imagine the beings which belong to the earth are thus held in a static image before us, nor are we presented with a 'holistic' vision in which all differences are erased, flattened out and blended together. Rather the powers of living beings and of the earth are brought forth:

All of the things of the earth, the earth itself in its entirety, flow together in reciprocal harmony. But this confluence is no blurring of outlines. What

flows here is the self-sustaining stream of boundary-setting, a stream that bounds everything that presences into its presence.

(OBT, 25/36)

So the power of the earth as brought forth in the work of art can also afford us an entrance way into the ecological dimension which I discussed in chapter 1, where the horizons of capacity are neither fixed nor erased, but are constantly being circumscribed and re-circumscribed, intersected and interwoven.

Yet we may object that art works do not always simply concede a space for living beings and the earth to appear in this way. The power of art can also be and has often been yoked to violence, not as something coming from an absolutely unnatural outside, but as a kind of *dynamis* which can break in and drive forward the stream of capacities flowing from the earth, breaking open the dynamic horizons of living things. The results of this violence towards living nature are yet to be measured. Heidegger comments in 1935 on those passages in the Antigone ode concerning the breaking of living capacity by way of violence:

The living thing, lightly dreaming, whose cycle of life reverberates in itself and its environs, constantly renews itself, streaming out over itself in ever new forms, and yet it remains in its own *single* route, it is familiar with the place where it spends the night and roams. As a living thing, it is fitted into the sway of the sea and the earth. Into this life that revolves within itself, its ambit, structure, and ground unfamiliar to them, humans cast their snares



and nets; they tear life away from its own order, enclose it in their paddocks and pens, and force it beneath the yoke. In one arena, breaking forth and breaking up; in the other, capturing and subjugating.-

(IM, 164-5/118)

So we have not lost track of our elusive quarry altogether. The powers which unhinge possibility, which overflow their own range and break the horizon of living capacity have a palpable effect upon the essence of animality and living beings. Living beings, once this violence is in their midst, cannot remain flowing within the ambit of their own capacities. Nevertheless, the compulsion which tears them from the earth and sea, breaking them with acts of violence and thoroughly subjugating them is perhaps only the necessity of one history. Thus we must once more plunge into the depths, as we come to the end of the range of *dynamis* in a power which surges back over the capacities and capabilities of the living, leaving them transformed in its wake.

### **§13 Machination and the Disempowerment of *Physis***

In *Contributions to Philosophy (From Ereignis)*, written between 1936 and 1939, Heidegger conducts a series of reflections which draw together the threads which we have been following: the phenomenological determination of living nature and the metaphysics of *dynamis* as the overpowering power of the earth and the violence of *physis*. However, the convergence of these two streams marks a point at which we must now turn towards the question of human being once more, in particular towards human beings as themselves living. This is a question which Heidegger has suspended since the early Twenties, when he fused the phenomenology of 'factual life' into what he saw as

the broader and more primordial remit of the 'world'.<sup>84</sup> But now it is no longer a question of determining the human being as Dasein, as that being which is open to its own being, nor of determining the being of animality. Now all determination is deferred in a time of decision, a decision which is not made by human beings but rather made about them.

*The* decision which is to take place shows a variety of faces, but these are not purely preliminary steps which can be decided outside the compass of the proposed 'turning' within being. They are decisions which themselves make up the decision concerning being. Heidegger describes a number of them, amongst which appears the following:

whether nature is degraded to the realm of exploitation by means of calculation and ordering, degraded to an occasion for "lived-experience," *or* whether as self-closing earth it bears the open of the imageless world-

(CP, 63/91)

If that is the decision of being then any narrowly conceived environmentalism becomes impossible. For precisely those victories which 'preserve' nature, which set aside areas of natural parks and wilderness, contribute most deeply to the degrading of nature to "lived experience" and set it up as a world of natural "images," not as a result of a so called shallow and image obsessed culture, but as a consequence of the Platonic decision concerning truth as idea. Heidegger seems to leave us little room for manoeuvre, forcing a decision upon which everything hangs. In a sense this is indeed

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<sup>84</sup> *Phenomenological Interpretations of Aristotle*, trans. Richard Rojcewicz, Indianapolis University

Press, Bloomington & Indianapolis, 2001 pp.61-66

the case, but this forced decision is intended not as a wild gamble in which nature will be recovered as a whole or lost forever, but as the open another space for manoeuvre in a dimension which remains outside the ken of these calculations.

This is not a decision which human beings make, but one which they stand within. For we stand within nature, whether the decision falls one way or the other. The moment of decision itself stands within the history of a decision already made. Neither a natural history nor a history of nature, nor a history predetermined by a single *archē*, but a history always being decided because it unfolds between one beginning and another. In *Contributions to Philosophy* Heidegger claims that this history has been the history of the *disempowerment of physis*. This occurs at the same moment that beings seem to become most powerful, to be full of a productive power which has previously barely been intimated, now unleashed to hold sway over all beings:

That *something makes itself by itself* and is thus also makeable for a corresponding procedure says that the *self-making by itself* is the interpretation of *physis* that is accomplished by *technē* and its horizon of orientation, so that what counts now is the preponderance of the makeable and the self-making (cf. The relation of *idea* to *technē*), in a word: *machination (Machenschaft)*. However, at the time of the first beginning when *physis* is disempowered, *machination* does not yet step into the light of day in its full essence.

(CP,88/126- translation modified)



'Machination' has become the being of beings, their beingness (*Seiendheit*), grown from the Aristotelian understanding of *physis* as that which arises from out of itself. In conjunction with *technē* understood not as something brought into being by human beings, but as an essential characteristic of being itself, *physis* is then understood as what is *self-made*. In machination (or 'manipulability') (*Machenschaft*) there is an absolute conjunction of power itself (*Macht*) and the power to make (*machen*).<sup>85</sup> As self-made it thus has the character of the makeable and can be made by any procedure which corresponds to that which takes place in the self-making of *physis*. Yet, at the inception of the first beginning machination does not come to its full power because the disempowerment of *physis* only begins here. Machination remains hidden within various metaphysical concepts such as *entelecheia*, *actus* and *ens creatum*. Only with

85 Despite the similarity of appearance which allows Heidegger to link these two words there is in fact no etymological link between them. In her political philosophy, which follows Heidegger's lead back to Aristotle's concept of *dynamis*, Hannah Arendt struggled to formulate a distinction between violent force (*Gewalt*) and power (*Macht*). Whilst she generally characterises violent force as a force which can produce and make changes from out of itself, she hopes to develop a concept of 'power' as a political arena which can only operate between and through multiplicity. Thus Arendt refuses the association of power (*Macht*) and making (*machen*), instead deriving it from *mögen* and *möglich*. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998) p.200. Volker Gerhardt confirms the falsity of an etymology which derives *Macht* from *machen*. He also helpfully summarises the distinction which Heidegger makes in his Nietzsche lectures between 'overpowering' (*Übermachtung*) and 'empowerment' (*Ermächtigung*). Although he makes some important suggestions as to how Nietzsche's concept of power falls outside the determinations which he finds in Heidegger's reading, Gerhardt is unable to push home his point because he only had the late publications of the Nietzsche lectures available at the time. So, for example, he points out that Heidegger sees in Nietzsche's concept of power a single power, 'Power has no contrary,' but he does not see that machination may have no contrary but is able to encompass all contraries and indeed is constituted by contraries. Volker Gerhardt, 'Macht und Metaphysik', in *Pathos und Distanz: Studien zur Philosophie Friedrich Nietzsches* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1988)

the full disempowerment of *physis* does the reign of machination reach its culmination.

It may seem that much of what now comes to be thought under the term machination was already anticipated in *Introduction to Metaphysics*. That being itself is thought in terms of an overwhelming and all consuming power which contains within itself all of the 'skills' of *technē*. Technology is not a curbing of the violence of nature, nor is it simply another expression of that violence, but a turning and disposal of the violence of nature within and over itself. Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to think that the term 'machination' simply takes over this earlier interpretation of the Greek 'first beginning' and brings it to a culmination in modernity. Certainly some of the elemental violent force from 1935 still exerts itself in the disempowerment of *physis*, expressed in ubiquitous machination, yet a great deal is also transformed as Heidegger moves between violent force (*Gewalt*) and power (*Macht*).

In particular, violent force itself is now reserved as a word which speaks only of the force exerted by beings upon one another. Although Heidegger did previously suggest that the holding-sway of *physis* was a power which need not immediately express itself in acts of violence, that it held within itself the possibility of restraint proper to *dynamis*, that power is now fully integrated into machination. Violence occurs only between beings when being has withdrawn completely from the stage of power:

*Power (Macht)* - the capability of safeguarding a possession from possibilities of violent force (coercion). As *safeguarding*, power always faces an opposing power and is therefore never an origin (*Ur-sprung*).



*Violent force (Gewalt)*- non-powered (*ohn-mächtiger*) capability for change which breaks unto beings, without leaping forth and without the prospect of possibilities. Everywhere where beings are to be changed by beings (*Seiendes durch Seiendes*) (not from out of being) violent force is necessary. Every act is an act of violence, such that here violent force is mastered with power as its measure.

(CP, 198/282- translation modified)

Power is strictly opposed to violent force. It is certainly not the sheer 'potential' for violence which may or may not express itself in acts of violence. Neither is it the source of violence, nor a possession which can be safeguarded with violence. Power safeguards against violence, not necessarily with a counter-violence, but always with some kind of counter force or resistance. Thus, power as that which safeguards, is forcibly drawn into the cycle of violence and machination which now constitutes the very meaning of being. Power masters violent force, can bridle it, restrain it and inhibit it. But it does not thus escape the sphere of violence, it becomes its very measure. And we should not underestimate what Heidegger is saying here: every act is an act of violence.

Is this not a terrible conflation and a trivialisation of violence? Certainly that is a great risk, but there are also reasons to take this thought seriously. We are forced to think again about the everyday acts of violence which we accept because they are so familiar and because they seem trivial in comparison to more spectacular atrocities. Of course, that should not lead us to conflate very different situations and kinds of 'act,' but it does unsettle the notion that it is easy to discern what it is that makes an act into an act of



violence. Furthermore, Heidegger's statement is an important challenge to those of good conscience, all beautiful souls who think that they can easily unravel and undo their own complicity in acts of violence. Finally, Heidegger does not say that every action is destined to be an act of violence, but only that every act pure and simple, when it has no view toward the domain of action or the dimension of possibility, but wants only to effect change to beings through putting other beings to work on them, is an act of violence.

What does the distinction between power and violence entail for the notion of the 'disempowerment of *physis*'? It means that if *physis* did once have a power to safeguard beings from violence it has lost that power. If *physis* held within its power the power to restrain its own violence, it can no longer contain itself. All power is now drawn into the cycle of violence because it can only exercise restraint through resistance. The power of the physical, which was metaphysically grasped as a generative power 'from below', or the power of a God which ruled 'from above' are both drawn into a field of force which operates only between beings and in effect only 'is' when it comes into effect between beings. Machination represents the ultimate triumph of Megarian metaphysics, a field in which there is no *dynamis* that is not in operation. Does this mean that another beginning would require a 're-empowerment' of *physis*? Would a proper relation between human beings and living nature then be restored in some way? Would that not entail a return to the world of the *Antigone* choral ode? Even if *physis* were restored with a power to safeguard living beings against violence, would that not simply be a retreat from violence back into the overwhelming power that bore it?

In fact, Heidegger soon reconsiders this formulation. In *Besinnung*, a manuscript written between 1938 and 1939, just after he had completed the large majority of *Contributions*

to *Philosophy*, Heidegger returns to the thought that machination as the very being of beings means that being is now inevitably thought as power. If this did entail a 'disempowerment' of *physis* that follows directly from a decisive empowerment of *physis*:

In our earlier reflections ("Contributions") we spoke of the disempowerment of *physis*. Thus it was inceptually and properly "power"- to what extent?

Where does this dis-empowerment come from, if not simply empowering, but not of *physis* as such, but indeed of *ousia* to *actus*?

Power- the *capability to be effective* (*Wirken*), securing and calculating and arranging of successes. *The effect* as effective, without immediately *effecting*! Power from out of "effect" (*Wirkung*) – precisely not from out of possibility!

(M,166-167/189- translation modified)

The disempowerment of *physis* follows directly from its empowerment as the empowerment of being thought as the actuality and effectiveness of *ousia*. One could then follow a direct line to the thinking of being as the power of manipulation in machination. Power has been thought primarily in terms of its effect, rather than its possibility. That is why Heidegger turned to the thinking of *dynamis* in Aristotle's metaphysics, and as we saw, opened a spectrum of force, attempting to reclaim it from the apparently inevitable prevalence of immediate effectiveness. It was within this



spectrum, I argued, that we can locate the beginning of a thinking of the capabilities of living nature outside the drive of instinct and its inhibition. We then came to a point where *dynamis* was seen to explode its own range or horizon, in the overwhelming violence of *physis*. This overpowering violence has been disempowered, not as Jonas would suggest, through the rise and rise of human dominance through technology, but through the empowerment of the being of beings as machination.

A re-empowerment of *physis*, even one which attempts a reorientation of *dynamis*, towards 'possibility', would now fail to produce another relation to living beings. Indeed, that failure would also be measured against the power to secure success. Perhaps such a relation cannot be 'produced' at all. The relation from out of which living beings unfold in their essence would still ultimately move within the cycle of violence and power. Above all it is important for us to think the disempowerment of *physis* as an opportunity, not to install protective mechanisms which would forcibly conserve a nature which has become vulnerable, but to think nature outside of its power or in its powerlessness to safeguard against violence. Nature in another beginning would not be 'vulnerable', as Jonas suggests nature has become in the age of technology, because it would be neither powerful nor without power, but outside of power. In *Besinnung* Heidegger makes a distinction between *Unmacht*, non-power, and *das Machtlose*, the power-less or power-free.<sup>86</sup> Nature thought as power-free would be neither secure nor vulnerable. It would be released from its own overwhelming power.

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86 Zrzysztof Ziarek suggests the translation of *das Machtlose* as the 'power-free' on the basis that it helps us to make the distinction which Heidegger is trying to make between that which has no power and that which is outside the sphere of power. The suffix 'los' also has a suggestion loosing or releasing. Zrzysztof Ziarek, 'Radical Art: Reflections after Adorno and Heidegger', *Adorno: A Critical Reader*, ed. Nigel Gibson and Andrew Rubin (Malden, Mass: Blackwell, 2002) pp.341-360



In attempting to think the relation of human beings to life in another nature, beyond or outside the second nature of machination, it will be important to identify what that relation has become as it is held within the scope of machination and then to seek for clues as to its possible transformation.

#### §14 The Technicised Animal

The drive of animality and the drive of humanity's ratio become identical.<sup>87</sup>

From the perspective of the reflections in *Contributions to Philosophy (From Ereignis)* the encounter which took place between Dasein and living nature in *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics* can be repeated and transformed. Any such encounter can only arise within the thinking of being as '*Ereignis*,' the event of appropriation. As such, being creates a place for encounter and is itself an event of en-counter. Not, however, an encounter between beings forming an inter-dependent unity or forging independence from dependence. The event of appropriation is an en-counter in which Heidegger now places world in strife with earth on an axis with human beings and the 'gods'. Within this 'fourfold' there is no encounter of the usual kind: '*Here there is no longer any "encounter," no appearing of man, who already beforehand stands firm and henceforth only holds on to what has appeared.*'<sup>88</sup> If there is an encounter from separate 'sides' then it occurs only in a between that, 'surges over its own bank, a bank which always belongs to the stream of Ereignis and from this surging first lets the bank stand

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<sup>87</sup> *The End of Philosophy*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (London: Souvenir Press, 1975) p.106. *Vorträge und Aufsätze*, 9th edn. (Stuttgart: Neske, 2000) p.90

<sup>88</sup> CP, p. 218/311

as bank.<sup>189</sup> This is an encounter which takes place *from Ereignis*, in its surge and wake rather than in a canalised route where all the terms already stand fast and the only question is how to erect the most stable means of crossing to the other shore. Any encounter will occur in the wake of a 'countering' which occurs not between beings nor even between being and beings, but within being itself:

Countering (*Ent-gegnung*) is the ground of the encounter that is here not even sought after.

Countering is rending open the "between" (*Zwischen*) unto which the over-against each other (*das Gegeneinander*) occurs as something needing an open.

(CP, 320/454)

This 'countering' is what is needed if there is to be an encounter. All seeking out of an authentic encounter between man and living beings will come to nothing if there is no place of encounter. Only when this "between" has been opened up can the encounter occur.

At this point the objection may well arise that it is not a countering between man and living beings or man and animal that Heidegger speaks of here, but between man and gods. In attempting to read conclusions for ecological thought into what appears to be a quasi-religiosity, even a return to religion of nature, do we not come dangerously close to an insipid spirituality, one which will fail in the face of the concrete problems of ecological crisis? Even if that can be avoided, is it not the case that living beings are

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<sup>189</sup> CP, p. 335/476-translation modified.

precisely excluded from this 'countering' event at the heart of beyng? Earth occurs in its strife with world; a strife, however, which is said to occur on the 'ground' of the countering of gods and man (CP, 337/479). Is it not the case that living nature will simply be washed up on the banks of the stream of beyng after the swell has subsided?

We cannot enter into a full interpretation of the significance of the gods, their origin in Hölderlin's poetic trope of 'holiness,' their connection to the figure of the 'last god' in *Contributions to Philosophy* and their later transformation into the 'divinities' countering the 'mortals'. We can, however, offer some argument as to why the presence in withdrawal of the gods may not be a decisive objection to a projected transformation of living nature in Ereignis.

It must be admitted that there is no priority given to appropriating a transformed relation to living nature in Heidegger's thinking of beyng as Ereignis. Yet there is no 'priority' given to any of the decisions which are here brought to the fore because each decision contains the whole and is in itself decided in the countering of beyng. Thus we can say that a transformed relation to living nature is not a priority but neither is it a secondary consideration. It is one decisive approach which can be made to the decision concerning another beginning. The countering is said to be between man and gods, but we know that it is a countering which first decides the two sides of the encounter. So 'man' as the counter to gods is not yet a being, not even an onto-ontological being, a being concerned with its own being. Neither can it be said that this 'man' is other than a being or an indeterminate being or in Nietzsche's phrase, 'a not yet determined animal'. This 'man' is countered by the gods. We are given no clue as to which gods.<sup>90</sup> There is no

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<sup>90</sup> To ascertain precisely why human beings are countered by the 'gods' in *Contributions to Philosophy* would require a lengthy examination in its own right. Suffice to say that many philosophers have



pantheon of beyng. Neither are these indeterminate gods, to be given attributes and powers through the decision of beyng. The gods are absent. Their very withdrawal is a drawing away from man which concedes the "between". There the world can come into strife with earth and the earth can come into its own, preserved by man. There too, living beings are given the space to renegotiate the terrain of their own 'life' and 'being,' so long held fast by pre-determinations, or simply left indeterminate, in the first beginning. If they were to be brought directly into this countering and opening then the risk would be run that everything is already decided in the very conceding of the space of decision, since living nature would draw all of its drives and capacities, its niches and adaptations, into the moment of decision. 'Man' serves as a place holder in which either Da-sein can be appropriated or the 'technicised animal' can take precedence. A 'placeholder,' not simply as an empty term waiting to be filled, but one who holds open the place in which that decision can be made.

The technicised animal appears in *Contributions to Philosophy* as a destiny towards which man seems headed. It is a possibility for man which has clear resonance with questioned the necessity and consequences of their fleeting but decisive appearance. David Farrell Krell suggests that there might be a suppression of living beings as the other counter to human beings here; what we might call man's 'other Other'. Such a suggestion certainly calls for further reflection on the intimate 'daimonic' nature of animals which could take up important leads, for example, from both Bataille and Agamben. Another direction of interrogation, which Eugen Fink allegedly once raised with Heidegger, would be to ask why the counter takes place between 'man' (*Mensch*) and gods (*Götter*) and not between 'man' (*Mann*) and 'woman' (*Frau*). Such a possibility is explored in depth in the works of Luce Irigaray. However, it should be asked whether a similar problem does not occur here, whereby the terms of the 'countering' would already bring with them specific determinations and possibilities. Whatever difficulties we may have with the countering of 'man' and 'gods' it seems that the intention with these terms for withdrawal and place-holding is to leave the manner in which this countering is played out as open as possible.

Nietzsche's thought of the 'Last Man'. Human beings are preparing themselves for the most banal and brutish animality in which biological instincts and the gigantic workings of technology are absolutely integrated. (CP, 68/98) The crossing over to a determination of man as 'technicised animal' is also a culmination of what was set in motion in the 'first beginning,' in Aristotle's definition of man as *zōon logon echon*. There is a complete change in man's nature which occurs between this definition and the 'rational animal,' yet a change which was nevertheless prepared for in that prior inception, just as the rational animal is pregnant with the technicised animal. That simultaneous transformation and continuity reigns between all metaphysical determinations of man.

The 'technicised animal' is not a fixed determination of man, but neither is it meant to be one amongst a list of possibilities for man, as though we could elect and render ourselves in any shape we please. Such a thought would itself be one of the ultimate thoughts of the technicised animal. The technicised animal is not simply a re-orientation of our self-understanding towards our essentially practical nature, prior to any theory or pure contemplation. It is not *homo faber*, man with an orientation towards producing things and above all himself. It is already man gone beyond himself in technicity.

How does Heidegger understand the technicity of the technicised animal? How does he understand its animality? Do the two form a simple conglomeration, or are they held together in a more essential manner? The beingness of beings as machination, the joint effort of production and power at the heart of the being of metaphysics is clearly at work in this conception of man. But what precisely is decided concerning man here and how does it relate to our central theme, the discovery of an appropriate relation to living



nature?

What should technicity be? Not in the sense of an *ideal*. But how does technicity stand within the necessity of overcoming the abandonment of being, respectively, of putting up being's abandonment to decision, from the ground up. Is technicity the historical pathway to the *end, to the last man's falling back into the technicised animal, which thus loses even the originary animality of the enjoined animal- or can technicity be above all taken up as sheltering and then enjoined into the grounding of Da-sein?*

(CP, 194/275)

Any understanding of the figure of the technicised animal must grasp what is being asked here about technicity and animality and their joining in the technicised animal. Notice that the question concerning technicity is posed here in an apparently normative mode. What *should* technicity be? It is not simply a question of defining technicity. Nor is it only a question of asking where technicity comes from, of determining its causes and its final goal. Both of these questions are bound up with the questioning of technicity, but they cannot be satisfactorily answered if they remain in this form, because as such they remain technical questions. The essence of technology, Heidegger will famously remark, is nothing technological. The questioning which aims at this essence can all too easily fall back into a measure of a successful or unsuccessful determination and assessment if it grasps this point, but remains technical in itself. Yet the 'should' is said to be nothing to do with an 'ideal,' so that we cannot understand this



question as normative in the usual way. Not only can it not point towards a technological perfectionism, it is not intended to ask what the best kind of technicity is at all. In this *should* is contained the question of what technicity *could* be, a technically impossible question, but a decision which must be made none the less.

Technicity itself can be a site of decision. Here we see for the first time signs of Heidegger's later understanding of technology. Unbridled machination and a world in which the 'gigantic' has become a defining *quality* are one possibility. Yet technicity in this form only directs us back to the site where such a decision takes place. Technicity does not then take on a benevolent form contrary to its former malevolence. Rather, the site where the decisions concerning technology are made is to be taken up into technicity. That is what would occur were 'man' as the technicised animal to make Da-sein his own, to let himself be Da-sein. The 'not yet determined animal' is already overdetermined. Man can be a site of decision rather than the site of determination.<sup>91</sup>

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91 In order for that to occur there are three dangers which must be guarded against. Firstly anti-technologism and secondly pro-technologism both miss the point. The former can often appear to be the stance of any questioning of technology, precisely because the latter is taken as a basic assumption. The latter, including any attempt to 'rescue' Heidegger from an apparent pastoralism by finding in the danger a countering 'saving power' is just as pointless. The famous 'saving power' of the 1953 lecture *The Question Concerning Technology* is not to be found beside and despite the danger, but is absolutely coincident with it insofar as a site of decision is a site in which things can fall either way. An inquiry which is neither pro- nor anti- technology seems to point towards neutrality, a return to the neutral power of technological tools. This third danger is ultimately the most insidious. The neutrality of technology always conceals the decisions which have already been made with regard to it, so that the site of decision is reduced to decisions about how best to navigate the open sea of technicity. Technicity as a site of decision is neither neutral nor partisan. For a helpful discussion of how Heidegger questions technicity in *Contributions to Philosophy* through the thinking of its non-essence (Un-wesen) see, Miguel de Beistegui, *Thinking with Heidegger: Displacements*

Returning to the passage cited above, there are two kinds of 'jointure' here which are to be carefully distinguished. We previously came across the idea of 'jointure' (*Fuge*) as a translation of the Greek *dikē*. Now it becomes integral to Heidegger's thinking of being as *Ereignis*. The two jointures of man can be seen as belonging on the one hand to the *dikē* of the first beginning and on the other hand to the 'fugue' of another beginning. Firstly, the technicised animal has lost even the *originary* animality of an 'enjoined' animal. The 'jointure' of such an animality can be understood on the basis of what was called 'captivation' (*Benommenheit*) in *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*. A *joining* of the animal with its environment prior to the determination of either organism or surroundings. The technicised animal loses such a jointure. It is an animal which, rather than circumscribing the range of new capacities for itself within jointure, is driven altogether beyond capacity.

The second 'jointure' is the possible enjoining of technicity into the grounding of *Da-sein*. This would not be a recovery of the originary animality which was lost in the technicised animal. Rather, it would be another enjoining altogether, one in which man is precisely not joined to his environment, but is dis-placed from that jointure and enjoined in the the jointure of *Ereignis*. It is not a question of distancing ourselves from the immediacy of the environing world, but a shift or turning which creates another space, where a decision can be made concerning our own belonging and the belonging of living beings to the earth.

If that is the case, then we have to face some difficult questions concerning the very meaning of an inquiry which hopes to discover an originary relation to living nature.

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(Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003) pp.98-101



What is to become of the jointure of 'original' animality if technicity is to be enjoined into the grounding of Da-sein? Can there be any recovery of living nature from the shock of technicity, that is, the accumulation of power within animality which drives it beyond its own capacity? The technicised animal is a possibility of man, but it could also describe the situation in which we now find other living beings. Their instinctual drives are shot through with rationality, whilst the process of rationalisation easily joins itself to the once 'irrational' behaviour of animals. Is an 'original' animality all but irrecoverable and would a recovery not signal simply a planned and rationalised return to our grounding in a more instinctual life? Was it not precisely a jointure of this kind, an attempt to recover an original animality for man, that bound together blood and soil for National Socialism?

The fate of the technicised animal is the fate of both man and living beings. An inquiry into our relation to living nature cannot avoid questioning our own animality. But not in the way this interrogation is usually conducted, whereby our 'animality' is simply assumed as a known fact and as such used to determine our relation to living nature. Rather, we need to understand the multiple ways in which Da-sein appropriates animality. It may be that we then discover more about our own animality than was ever thought possible. Our *own* animality, an animality which is appropriate and appropriated to us.

A further comparison with a recent interpretation of this situation will help us to understand Heidegger's position and the dilemma which we find ourselves in when faced with our own animality. As was briefly indicated in chapter 1, Giorgio Agamben claims that our encounter with the animal is always informed by the attempt to separate



our own animality from our humanity. The issue of animality is the issue of the animal 'in us'. More precisely, any encounter which we have with animals and living nature is always already determined by the necessity to maintain a split within ourselves:

It is possible to oppose man to other living things, and at the same time to organize the complex- and not always edifying- economy of relations between men and animals, only because something like an animal life has been separated within man, only because his distance and his proximity to the animal have been measured and recognised first of all in the closest and most intimate place.

But if this is true, if the caesura between the human and the animal passes first of all within man, then it is the very question of man- and of "humanism"- that must be posed in a new way. In our culture, man has always been thought of as the articulation and conjunction of a body and a soul, of a living thing and a *logos*, of a natural (or animal) element and a supernatural or social or divine element. We must learn instead to think of man as what results from the incongruity of these two elements, and investigate not the metaphysical mystery of conjunction, but rather the practical and political mystery of separation.<sup>92</sup>

Agamben reads the history of the Occidental engagement with animality as the history of the maintenance of this caesura within ourselves. The workings of that history amount to the machinations of an 'anthropological machine' which continually works

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92 *The Open: Man and Animal*, trans. by Kevin Attell (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004) pp.15-

open the split within our own being. It is a split which has been articulated in innumerable ways and certainly in ways which defy any straightforward dualisms. However, when these bifurcations are made more complex this is all too often an oil which ensures the smooth working of the anthropological machine. Moreover, all of the well intentioned attempts at reconciliation and reunification simply exacerbate the problem. It is not a reunification of the elements of our nature which is required, a reunification which could only ever function upon the assumption of caesura, but a disruption of the anthropological machine itself, which has produced the various parts of the soul in the first place. It is only if such a disruption of these workings can be brought about that we can become open for a relation to other animals which would not be predetermined by the desire to maintain this caesura within ourselves.

When it comes to Heidegger's insistence upon an essential distinction between Dasein and the animal, Agamben maintains that this can be read as a symptom of his continuing to work within the ambit of the anthropological machine.<sup>93</sup> Perhaps he is the 'last philosopher' to function here, although all things considered, that would seem to be unduly optimistic. Agamben even goes so far as to suggest that the strife between world and earth can be read as another symptom of the workings which engineer an abyss between the open world of man and the closed earth of animality.

It is quite possible to see why Agamben comes to this conclusion. The world is from the start inseparable from Dasein's being-in-the-world, whilst the concept of earth does appear to hold the key to later attempts by Heidegger to think animality again and anew. Nevertheless, this identification of the strife within truth, the strife between world and earth, with the caesura between Dasein and animal cannot be maintained. As we saw

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93 Ibid p.75

above, if the earth is in strife with world it cannot come into its own as earth without this strife. Animals are, for Heidegger, closed out from this strife altogether. He did draw a distinction between the animal being 'open' to its surroundings, an openness which allows the horizon of its environing ring to be re-circumscribed, and the manifest openness of Dasein, which brings forth the opening itself. Now in *Contributions to Philosophy*, Da-sein is not straightforwardly identified with man, but is an opening which man can make his own. It is certainly the case that Heidegger maintains access to the strife of truth as a ground for distinguishing man from the animal, but that does not necessarily hold them apart or separate them. It is a distinction maintained in the hope of appropriate encounter.

Furthermore, we must not leave Heidegger's thought aside if we hope to disrupt the workings of the anthropological machine, for he is intimately familiar with its workings and effects. It is important to realise that this anthropological machine works at all levels. The distinction which Agamben makes between the metaphysical 'mystery' of conjunction and the practical and political machinations of separation is a distinction of 'level' which is thoroughly rooted in the metaphysical tradition. That metaphysics, according to Heidegger, inevitably separates 'regions' of beings and arranges them at various levels. The very same paragraph of *Contributions to Philosophy* in which the technicised animal appears as the last possibility of the last man is entitled 'The levels of beyng'. Here and in the following paragraphs the attempt to think the sheltering of the earth and an originary animality is contrasted to the order of a metaphysics which puts the regions of being into a leveled system. The distinction of practical and political machinations from metaphysical 'mystery' feeds into the order of this metaphysics. When Heidegger maintains that 'machination' has become the very being of beings, we



are no longer entitled to say that political necessity can take over from some metaphysical mystery, since both 'levels' are determined by the conjunction of making and power which has sprung from the first beginning. Replacing wonder at the mystery of conjunction with a critical analysis of the machinations that produce separation is a necessary task, but will not in itself disrupt the anthropological machine.

Moreover, whilst it is true that any mysterious conjunction within human beings relies upon the prior separation of elements, the anthropological machine does not only work open these separations. It also works in reverse, conjoining elements of body, soul and spirit, folding and sealing them together so that any birthmarks of separation are healed over. There is a unity of man which does not rely upon the conglomeration and articulation of properties and faculties. This unity is the unity of the technicised animal, whose ratio has become an instinctual drive and whose instinct has become rationalised. There is no longer any separation nor conjunction here but a simple unity of man in machination. The technicised animal no longer feels the eternal punishment of Prometheus, tearing it apart and healing it again day after day. Innumerable separations and conjunctions are now integrated into the primary unity of machination itself. Might this not even turn out to be the originary meaning of *fascism*? A binding which binds together all of the faculties of man and the capacities of life and bundles them together as a *symbol*, an enjoining, of power. That binding binds tight and tries to erase the *disjointure* which accompanies joining, giving it space to play out its range of possibility.

Agamben is aware that no conjunction of elements will disrupt the process of separation. In *The Open* he draws upon passages from Foucault and Benjamin to try to

step to the side of this play of inclusion and exclusion, founded upon the ambiguity of man's animality. Benjamin, for example, calls for a 'mastery of the relation between man and nature' which Agamben interprets as a relation which would no longer be the mastery of one by the other, but a constant intercourse between the two which is not subject to the law of separation.<sup>94</sup>

Yet what Heidegger calls 'jointure' can also be seen as an attempt to step aside from the machinations of the anthropological machine. It is a countering and joining in an event which does not thereby produce various faculties and make them available for further processes and procedures. There is an 'articulation' which remains essential to this encounter, but an articulation which is in itself simple. The event of appropriation (*Ereignis*) articulates man in and through being. Yet there is expropriation (*Enteignis*) at the heart of this event which is a necessary part of the very jointure. There is no 'joint' without this room for manoeuvre created by expropriation. It dislocates the joint of being, but in so doing allows it to articulate itself anew. This disjunctive jointure is, we must admit, in the closest proximity to the separations and conjunctions of machination. So close that the distance could not be measured. The whole difficulty then, will be to fathom this proximity as we hope to step back from the anthropological machine. There could be no sure sign or measure that this has taken place. Only vigilance against being drawn into the hermetically sealed unity of the technicised animal.

## **§15 Biologism and Anthropomorphism**

Life is not left behind in the event of appropriation. Rather, as living beings are set free from machination man made freed for Da-sein. This is not a setting free from

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94 Ibid pp.81-84

domestication back into the wild. As Heidegger puts it in his lectures on Nietzsche's second Untimely Meditation in 1939, the thinking of the essencing of being from out of truth requires that: 'the essence of human beings is ripped free from animality; not in order to make them harmless and civilised and satisfied, to make from the beast of prey a pet in the house of unquestioned driving onwards, but rather to show man the completely other summit of his essence as *Da-sein*.' (GA 46, 218) In particular there are two shackles which have held man bound, which we can now understand more fully in their joint operation: biologism and anthropomorphism.

Heidegger's own attempts think what is at stake in 'biologism' can only be approached through his ongoing engagement with Nietzsche and Nietzsche's appropriation by biologism. It is perhaps true to say that Heidegger both takes these biologicistic readings seriously and initiates a thorough critique of the conceptual field in which they arise. Simply identifying the perpetrators as 'ideologues' and their readings as biologicistic may suffice to dismiss many of the more crass readings, but it will not suffice in the end because it does not penetrate to the metaphysical underpinnings of biologism, nor the truth of Nietzsche's biologism.

The extent of Heidegger's engagement with this issue has not been fully appreciated because commentators have until recently been confined to the two volume version of Heidegger's Nietzsche lectures which appeared in the 1960s. There we find only a much reduced version of the section on 'Nietzsche's alleged biologism' from the lectures on 'The Will to Power as Knowledge'.<sup>95</sup> If we turn to the volume which gives an

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<sup>95</sup> David Krell's comments in *Daimon Life: Heidegger and Life-Philosophy*, for example, although extremely helpful are confined to this published version. A translation of the later two volume edition edited by Krell is the only text available in English at present.



approximation of Heidegger's original lectures, along with other lectures concerned with Nietzsche of the period, we are able to appreciate Heidegger's changing views on this matter in their broader scope.

It may be surprising to discover how far Heidegger is concerned to establish the strong sense in which 'biologism' is an appropriate title for Nietzsche's thought. Nietzsche's thought is of course shot through with a concern for life, to such an extent that he even claims life to be the only way in which he can understand "being": how could this thought not be biologicistic? (GA 47, 58-59) 'Biologism' does in a sense hit upon the kernel of Nietzsche's metaphysics and is not to be thought away as the 'outer shell' of his thought which can be discarded upon closer examination. (GA 47, 60) Nevertheless, Heidegger argues, this not incorrect identification of biologism may still turn out to be the primary obstacle to our understanding if we do not examine what this title really proclaims.

What 'biologism' usually means is the transference and extension of the concepts and results of biological science into other areas of investigation or regions of being. The transference of biological research onto history for example. (GA 6.1, .472, cf. GA 47, 65) As such 'biologism' would hardly face many objections in the age of inter-disciplinarity. If this is what it signifies then biologism may be precisely what is scientifically required, together with a corresponding 'historicism', 'psychologism' and so forth. The only objection would arise if biology were seen to take priority and not in its turn submit itself to the results of other fields. This common sense of biologism amounts to a kind of metaphors of life, a transference from out of the region of biology facilitated by the acknowledgement of the fluid and insecure boundaries of

scientific disciplines. Yet, is it not the case that some decision concerning compatibility has to be made in order that such transferences can occur? Biologism in the ordinary sense, according to Heidegger is only the consequence of something more essential. Even when biological research remains within its own boundaries it is a 'biologism' so long as it does not recognise as such the metaphysical decisions concerning the determination of life upon which this research rests (GA 47, 85). Such decisions make the transference of biological results into other areas of research possible, producing a 'biologism' prior to any actual transference:

Nietzsche determines beings as a whole as life, not as a result of an expansion of the biological way for thinking about plants and animals to the whole world. It is the other way around: in the course of the traditional and in its historical cycle pre-determined metaphysical guiding question, what beings as a whole are, he comes to the conclusion: beings are will to power. Will to power however is the essence of life, *if* life means: becoming as overcoming (*werdendes Übersteigen*).

(GA 47, 86)

Biologism and anti-biologism alike think that what is at stake is the legitimacy or illegitimacy of conceptual transference between regions of beings and both fail to recognise that any such debate already presupposes a metaphysics, a doctrine concerning beings as a whole and their divisibility into regions. If we once recognise the metaphysical character of biologism, then we can identify a much more intractable 'biologism,' the metaphysics of life itself. A field is established in which the metaphors of life can take root, the powerful results of which become evident in

Nietzsche's thought. In Nietzsche's hands this metaphysics of life becomes a metaphysics of survival. Life, not continuing on the basis of a bare minimum as bare life, but living only insofar as it constantly outstrips itself.

However, it is in his seminar-lectures concerning Nietzsche's Second Untimely Meditation, held in the previous semester to those on 'The Will to Power as Knowledge' that Heidegger makes one of his most pregnant suggestions as to how we are to understand Nietzsche's own metaphysical biologism. Will to Power characterises the life of plants and animals as it characterises the 'life' of beings as a whole, if and only if life is a becoming which constantly overcomes and overwhelms itself. Life is life-enhancement. Yet Heidegger argues that even such a conception, one which makes its earth shattering power felt throughout metaphysics, still remains within the field which was opened up by Aristotelian dynamism:

“Biologism”- if we are to use such an empty term- is the necessary *result* of “Dynamism”, *dynamis* is understood as force (*Kraft*) and force as power (*Macht*).

(GA 46, 86)

Force and power: the two extremes of the spectrum of *dynamis*. At once encompassed in and overlooked by this dynamism is the entire spectrum of living capacity, conversant capability, art and violence. There are two criticisms which can be made of such a dynamism. It fails to bring into view the different kinds of *dynamis* adequately and thus fails to distinguish the 'life' of different beings, especially animals and human beings. The distinction is inevitably led back to *what* they can do rather than *how* their



various capabilities are enabled and possessed as capabilities. Furthermore, dynamism of this kind becomes an ultimate metaphysical principle, a first philosophy. The 'other beginning' which Heidegger attempts to initiate would, on the other hand, think *dynamis* as participating in the essencing of truth and the event of appropriation. Not as themselves first principles, but as openings which allow each phenomenon to appear on its own terms, terms which are appropriate to it because they are articulated in appropriation.<sup>96</sup>

Anthropomorphism, apparently the very opposite of biologism, now turns out to be its mirror image and a participant in the same logic.<sup>97</sup> Anthropomorphism too appears at

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96 To what extent Heidegger ultimately holds Nietzsche to this 'dynamism' is of course debatable. Often it appears that Heidegger cannot or will not make this decision. In *Contributions to Philosophy*, for example, having set out three points in which Nietzsche's thinking of the relation of life to truth is question worthy, he goes on to suggest that Nietzsche's philosophy 'renders life free in its unsurpassable possibilities', and that what makes Nietzsche's thought so difficult for Nietzsche himself to think is precisely his insight into the essencing of truth: Da-sein. (CP, p.254/364-365)

97 I use the term anthropomorphism here because it is the concept which Heidegger uses most frequently in his critique of the phenomenon in question at the end of the Thirties. Environmental philosophy has often identified 'anthropocentrism' as the greatest contributor to environmentally destructive attitudes. 'Anthropomorphism', on the other hand, is a movement in the opposite direction, although one grounded on the same conviction that we have been able to be pin down what is essentially 'human': it is not a concentration on the human beings to the detriment of others, but a making human of others.

In reply to those who accuse *Being and Time* of anthropocentrism Heidegger claims in a footnote to 'On the Essence of Ground' that it is incomprehensible to make this accusation of a text whose central claim is that Dasein is 'ex-centric,' always outside of itself and in the world. (Pathmarks, p.371, n.66) This may appear somewhat insensitive to the point of the criticism, which surely wants to ask as Heidegger himself will do, if beginning with the analysis of Dasein does not plough the question of being back into the field of metaphysics. Nevertheless, I think this reply has to contain the

first as a transference from out of one field of research, anthropology, into fields outside the human, thus as a 'metaphorics of man'. In *Besinnung* Heidegger turns his attention towards this phenomenon:

Anthropomorphism is the explicit or implicit, acknowledged or unacknowledged conviction, that beings as a whole *are* what they are and the way they are, through the power of and in accordance with the representations which pass by in human beings, i.e., in the animal endowed with reason as one life-process amongst others. What are named and recognised as beings are something made by man.

(M, 137/159– translation modified)

The problem of anthropomorphism thus encompasses every philosophical debate which moves back and forth between 'subjectivism' and 'objectivism,' between the world as

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kernel of any Heideggerian response to such accusations.

It may be that the term 'anthropologism', adopted by Françoise Dastur, gets to the root of the phenomenon in question, 'The critique of anthropologism in Heidegger's thought', *Appropriating Heidegger* ed. Faulconer and Wrathall (Cambridge University Press, 2000) pp.119-134. Nevertheless anthropomorphism captures more of the sense of the phenomenon as here understood, that is, the apparent 'humanisation' of what is not human. Silvia Benso, on the other hand, suggests that rather than anthropocentrism it is 'anthopologocentrism' which is to be guarded against. The point seems to be that we cannot avoid the fact that anything we think is thought by us as human beings so we could not escape anthropocentrism pure and simple, but the 'logocentrism' of metaphysics has coloured and tainted this necessity. Silvia Benso *The Face of Things : A Different Side of Ethics* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2000) p.44. It seems to me that Heidegger wants to argue the opposite point, that thinking is not a property belonging to human beings and that it is our thinking of *logos* that has been distorted by our convictions about *anthrōpos*.



something which is played out in human representations and human representations as part of a life-process which takes place amongst all other beings, a process like any other. Anthropomorphism, as the 'humanisation' of beings as a whole can break out at any time within this conceptual field, so that it is in no way ameliorated by the equal and opposite assertion that beings as a whole are not human or are *independent* of the human. The space for the affirmation or denial of anthropomorphism is thus one which metaphysics has long since conceded. The humanisation of beings as a whole is possible on the basis of a decision concerning being, that being is representative and corresponds to representation.

Nevertheless, Heidegger argues that the humanisation of beings as a whole and the metaphysical decision concerning being is not what is most essential in anthropomorphism. At its heart is the 'resistance to any possibility of a fundamental transformation of man.' (M, 137/159) In order for other beings and beings as whole to take on the shape of the human, the shape of humanity itself must be set fast. That is not to say that we are unable to recognise changes which may take place within the life-process to which human beings belong. But precisely because we are so sure that they belong there and nowhere else, what is essential about human beings is held in place. The animality of human beings can be understood through their representative capabilities or their representative capabilities through their animality. So long as human beings do not belong anywhere else but to this beingness of beings, representation and life-process of beings, the humanisation of beings will roll onwards. Anthropomorphism is at heart the humanisation of man, not his production in any particular shape or form, but the casting of the mould for man in one form or another. To free thought from anthropomorphism it is not enough to assert that beings as a whole are or are not moulded to the form of man. What is needed is the ability to find in what



appears everywhere as the *humanisation* (*Vermenschung*) of beings the possibility for a radical *dis-humanising* (*Ver-menschung*) of man.<sup>98</sup>

In the late 1930s, rather than simply report about the condition of man and the desolate situation of living nature, Heidegger brings man and nature into crisis. A crisis from which we cannot rescue ourselves because it is not to be resolved by a choice between various self-representations. The crisis of humanity is at one and the same time the crisis of the earth and the crisis of living nature. The crisis, unlike most of those which human beings constantly find themselves hemmed in by, can easily be avoided or concealed. Neither is it a crisis which would yield to the economy of crisis, which demands an efficient solution and return to the business at hand.<sup>99</sup> But it is a crisis not yet totally outside our ken. It is a crisis which provides us with a space for thought in which human beings and living beings can belong together in a way which was never before possible, because it lies beyond possibility and actuality as determinations of the being of beings.

If biologism and anthropomorphism are really to be avoided then we will not be able to take refuge in any middle ground between the two. The ground itself must be removed. Nature as the ground of life and language as the ground of man must be broken from their habitual runs and joined into an event which articulates itself but refrains from

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98 Parvis Emad and Thomas Kalary bring this reorientation to the fore by rendering *Vermenschung* as 'dis-humanization'. However, the movement between the two orientations in the text then becomes difficult to discern.

99 See, Jacques Derrida's critique of the 'economy of crisis' in *Negotiations: Interventions and Interviews, 1971-2001*, ed. and trans. by Elizabeth Rottenberg (Stanford University Press, 2002) and *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question*, trans. by Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989) pp.60-61

fully expressing itself. The echo of the earth must be heard in *physis* so that living beings can be set free from the possibility of life understood as its own persistent self-overcoming. Language, that which has held out between nature and man, inventing him and being itself his invention par excellence, may just hold the key for bringing this crisis to a head:

*Language, whether spoken or silent, is the first and most widespread humanisation of beings. So it appears. But precisely language is the most originary dehumanisation of human beings as extant living beings and the “subject” and everything heretofore. And with that the grounding of Da-sein and the possibility of the dehumanisation of beings.*

(CP, 359/510- translation modified)

If we are able to take up this suggestion from the final paragraph of *Contributions to Philosophy*, then perhaps we will be able to prepare the way for a living nature which is neither cast in the shape of the human nor driven beyond the bounds of its own capacity, but released into the unique freedom of those capacities.

## Chapter 4

### Natural Languages

Like a poet hidden,  
In the light of thought,  
Singing hymns unbidden,  
Till the world is wrought

Percy Bysshe Shelley, 'To a Skylark'

How can we speak appropriately of nature? Or rather, if it is not simply a question of our deciding to speak in a certain way, how can language be appropriate for nature? This is surely a question of the utmost importance for environmental philosophy, for if nothing else the philosophising which goes under that name is a thinking which brings language to bear upon nature. To employ one of Heidegger's favourite forms of expression, it 'brings nature to language'. It speaks of nature, but perhaps also brings that which is spoken of into the very midst of language. Mindful of the possibility that the very language which we use to speak of nature may perpetuate the annihilation which stimulated its philosophising in the first place, environmental thought attempts to initiate another way of speaking of nature. It takes care of nature in caring for language.

This question of a language appropriate for nature often finds an all too ready answer. On the one hand, the question is found to be unnecessary, since language itself is



understood as a quite natural phenomenon. The supposed gap to be bridged between language and nature is quite illusory. On the other hand, the constructivist approach insists that nature is subject to language and that not only our understanding of nature but nature itself is created and constructed in and through language. Either language is brought home to nature or nature to language; language is naturalised or nature is logicised. What the idea of appropriation seeks is not such an identification, but a thinking of language and nature which speaks from the point prior to their coming to occupy specific and rigorously delineated regions of being.

As we saw in the previous chapter, language seems to spread what is proper to man over the whole world. As such it appears to be the very root of the humanisation of the world. It is also in the search for the origin of language that we find the constant refrain of metaphysics, the refrain which calls man away from his own animality and in so doing confirms the primacy of that animality. So, however unlikely it may seem at first, it is in the thinking of language that we find the inescapable juncture at which environmental philosophy and the thinking of animality must meet.

We have already had occasion to partially trace the development of Heidegger's understanding of *logos*. In chapter 2 we saw that the reading of Aristotle in the 1931 lecture course on the *Metaphysics* develops the notion of conversance (*Kundschaft*) as that which informs all human *dynamis*. Conversance is the milieu of all man's natural and cultural capabilities. At the same time we came across an important hint at a *logos* that precedes and informs conversance, an Heraclitean *logos* which traversed and unified the entire spectrum of *dynamis* in nature. There is a *logos* which informs human nature, but *logos* is also of nature as such. In the final analysis, however, these are not

two distinct *logoi*, for it is the very ability to orientate our explorations by means of the *logos* of natural phenomena *as such* which takes place in conversance.

If we are to move further into the midst of this milieu of questions and develop the thought of a language which takes the ground from under the humanisation of the world and bears with it the possibility of an appropriate relation to animality and living nature, we should first take a step back. Returning once more to the lecture course on *The Fundamental Concepts of Aristotelian Philosophy* we find an analysis of Aristotle's distinction between *logos* and *phōnē* in the first chapter of the *Politics*. Whilst the strength and originality of this interpretation allows Heidegger to side step some of the more obvious criticisms which could be made of his contention that animals are 'denied language,' it can still be shown that insofar as Heidegger remains caught within this conception he will fail to do full justice to the phenomena of animal language. With this in mind, I will follow up on the hint from *Contributions to Philosophy* that it is in language itself that we might be able to displace the humanisation of the world, whilst showing how that project can be taken up in the light of an attempt to find our way into an appropriate being in the midst of living nature.

### **§16 Animal Cries and Political Speech**

A great deal in the history of philosophical questioning of animality has turned around the question of language. Even if we recall Bentham's plea for recognition that it is not reason, nor speech, nor anything of the sort that is to the point in our ethical relations to animals, but their capacity to suffer, the issues raised by the question of language stubbornly remain. For is it not ultimately Bentham's inability to distinguish carefully enough between different *kinds* of pleasure and suffering which leave his reasoning, and



ultimately perhaps all utilitarian calculus, open at a decisive point, at the point of *decision* itself? The very *indifference* which utilitarianism shows in the face of such differences, the indifference which allowed it to break free of entrenched metaphysical prejudice and in the Twentieth Century bring the suffering of animals to the forefront of at least a marginal ethical and political agenda, cannot be sustained if we are to preserve the differential ecology of living capacities.<sup>100</sup>

The concern with this constellation of ideas about language and animality, which seems to have formed a sediment even in the midst of the whirlpool of Heidegger's fundamental ontology and beyond, is perhaps best exemplified by Michel Haar's far reaching worry:

The absence of speech in animals is more radical than the absence of the world. It is not a question of an *impoverished* but an absolute privation of speech. On this point the break between human beings and animals becomes the most unbridgeable. "The leap from living animals to humans that speak is as large if not larger than that from the lifeless stone to living being."

Despite the absence of articulated language, one could object that Heidegger's phenomenology has taken into account neither the cries, moaning, nor the grimaces, mimicry, gestures, and postures which are

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<sup>100</sup> Derrida also gives decisive importance to Bentham's question 'can they suffer?' in the context of questioning concerning animal language. Jacques Derrida, 'The Animal That Therefore I Am (More to Follow)', trans David Wills, *Critical Inquiry* 28 (Winter 2002) p.396 For another discussion of Bentham's question in this context see, John Llewelyn, *The Middle Voice of Ecological Conscience: A Chiasmic Reading of Responsibility in the Neighbourhood of Levinas, Heidegger and Others* (Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1991) pp.49-50



irrefutably modes of expression among, for example, mammals.<sup>101</sup>

This short passage raises a plethora of questions. Firstly, is it the case that the animal's supposed lack of language can be raised as a question distinct from and moving beyond its environmentality? In particular, can the difference between these questions rest upon the 'impoverishment' of the animal world on the one hand, and the absolute lack of language on the other? If our reading of *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics* and the part played by the notion of 'poverty' in that text in chapter 1 was correct, then we have reason to doubt that this is the case. Secondly, although it is undoubtedly the case that the phenomenology which Haar is referring to, that of the 1929/30 course, does show a distinct lack of attention to what would usually pass as 'animal language,' is it the case that Heidegger never paused to consider these phenomena?

In fact, we do find such a meditation, hidden in the thicket of a close reading of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and unavailable to Haar at the time of his study. It shows decisively that the question of the animal environment and the question of animal language cannot be raised separately. That rather than the question of language moving beyond that of environment or posing as an axis around which everything in the environment revolves, the question of language, whether human or animal, only enters its proper milieu when it is posed in terms of the question concerning environment and world. At the same time the issue of animal suffering is also placed squarely back into this milieu, from which utilitarian calculus has attempted to extract it. And finally, environmental politics is shown to be not simply another branch of endlessly proliferating specialisations in moral and political theory, but rooted in our conception of the political *per se*.

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<sup>101</sup>Michel Haar, *The Song of the Earth: Heidegger and the Grounds of the History of Being*, trans.

Reginald Lilly (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993) p.29

Whilst commenting on a variety of Aristotle's texts in *The Fundamental Concepts of Aristotelian Philosophy*, Heidegger aims at regaining the very 'milieu of conceptuality'. He turns to a well known passage near the beginning of the *Politics*, where Aristotle gives a brief indication as to why the social arrangements of animals are not to be regarded as political in the proper sense, and in so doing makes a number of distinctions which will be absolutely crucial for Heidegger's understanding of human Dasein and of animal life. The primary distinction around which Aristotle's argument turns is, of course, that between *logos* and *phōnē*, speech and voice, vocal 'call' and articulate language. The passage in question is the *Politics* 1253a 8-19. Aristotle has made the claim that man is by nature a political animal. Yet he is political in a sense which differs from the sociability of other animals, because he has speech rather than simply voice. Voice allows animals to communicate their pleasure (*hēdy*) and pain (*lypēron*) to others, whilst speech allows man to indicate what is beneficial (*sympheron*) and harmful (*blaberon*), as well as what is just and unjust. Now it is often assumed that speech is something added to voice, that man retains an animal voice with which he cries out in pleasure or pain, but to which is sometimes added an extra *sense*, the sense which allows him to speak of the beneficial and harmful, the just and the unjust. Furthermore, the basis of a great deal of linguistics and semiology has been constructed on the assumption that in an individual 'speech act' the voice and the speech, natural sound and sense, sign and signified can in principle be distinguished, if not actually separated. Every act of speech is an animal cry endowed with sense. Heidegger's reading, on the other hand, upsets the idea that the animal voice retains in principle its natural identity in human speech. Rather, voice and speech point to two different ways of being alive:



In *phōnē* just as in *logos* a *determination of being-in-the-world* appears, a *determinate way in which the world comes up against life*, in the first case in the character of *hēdy* and *lypēron*, in the second case in the character of beneficial and harmful (*sympheron*, *blaberon*)- fundamental determinations: namely that the world in natural Dasein is not a factual situation which I can come to know, no actuality or reality, but rather that *the world is for the most part there in the way of the beneficial and the harmful, of that which raises life and that which sends it into discord*. And these ways of access are found first of all in 'vocal expression' and then in 'speech', in *phōnē* and in *logos*.

(GA 18, 47)

It is striking that here and elsewhere in this text Heidegger speaks of an animal Dasein and the determinate way in which animals are in the world. Clearly these terms are reserved for human beings in *Being and Time*, but not so as to exclude the question of the determination of animal environmentality. Rather, only for the reason that *Dasein*, the manifestation of being, is precisely the determination of *our* 'being-in-the-world'. This may come as a surprise to those who assume that Heidegger had always used these terms in a technical manner which excluded 'mere living beings.'

What can the animal voice tell us? Is it simply a natural part of pleasure or pain felt by the animal, a cry which naturally and spontaneously erupts from the animal as it undergoes these conditions? Does it *indicate* nothing, have no *sense*? That is, after all, what Aristotle's remarks have seemed to many to be saying. For Heidegger, however, it is a question of attending to what the animal cry indicates about the whole manner in



which the animal is in an environment and in it with other animals:

The encountering of the world in the character of *hēdy* is for the animal, e.g. a good place to feed and not a symphony. It is always something which there is in the environment (*Umwelt*) of the animal. These existents (*Daseiende*) in the character of coming-up-against-the-animal are *indicated* (*angezeigt*), the animal gives a 'sign', *sēmeion*. It *indicates* (*zeigt an*) existents with the character of *hēdy*. It does not make a report about the presence (*Vorhandensein*) of pleasant things outside in nature, but rather this indication and crying out is in itself a *enticing call* (*Locken*) or a *warning*. The indication of existents is enticement or a warning. Enticing call and warning have in themselves the character of *addressing-oneself-to...* Enticing call means: to bring another animal into the same disposition (*Befindlichkeit*); warning: to urge it out of this disposition. Enticing call and warning as *urging out* and *bringing in* themselves lie upon the ground of *being-with-one-another*. Already in enticing calls and warnings it is shown that the animal is with another. This being-with-one-another is clearly precisely in this specific character of being of the animal as *phōnē*. It is not shown (*aufgezeigt*) nor announced (*Kundgegeben*) that something as such is there. The animal does not come to the point of stating something as present (*vorhanden*), it *indicates* it only in the surrounding circle (*Umkreis*) of its animal having-to-do-with. Through this, that the animal indicates the threatening and fearful etc., it gives an indication of the being of the world and at the same time it announces its being in it. The world is indicated as *hēdy* and at the same time it is an announcement of being, being-threatened, having-found etc.

Animal cries of enticement or warning are never simply outward expressions of the state of mind in which an animal finds itself. That is because there is no case of finding itself in a physiological or psychological state which is not at one and the same time a state brought on in the face of an encounter with its surrounding circle and an urging of its fellows into or out of certain dispositions in the face of those encounters. The calls of animals are *indicators and inducers of dispositional transposition* in the animal which calls out, calling those that hear to follow it into this disposition. They never indicate a state of affairs to which they could subsequently take up one or another disposition. The same will be true of the dispositions which play such a crucial role in the analysis of Dasein in *Being and Time*. The animal voice indicates an entire mode of existence in the face of a surrounding circle and being with others in those surroundings. It is not a hollow cry, a potential vehicle of sense, but it has its own sense. If *logos* has another sense then it will not be a supplement to the voice, but a displacement of the voice.

Despite certain appearances to the contrary, it is not Heidegger's intention to describe a level of human existence in this description of the animal voice. In particular, we should not take the claims that the animal voice does not indicate anything 'present', or 'present-at-hand', as a claim that the circle with which the animal 'has-to-do' is anything like the 'ready-to-hand' everyday world of Dasein. On the contrary, it is precisely in terms of that world of circumspection that Heidegger will go on to describe the world indicated by the *logos* where man speaks of what is beneficial and harmful. Indeed, it seems likely that part of the reason that Heidegger dropped this description of animal

environmentality in contrast to Dasein's being-in-the-world was the difficulty of rigorously distinguishing the two modes of encounter in a discourse which itself announces a difference. This is precisely the problem which we saw taken up again in *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics* in terms of a 'deconstructive' understanding of animality.

What interests us here is the specific problem of animal language and this early passage does offer a tantalising sketch of how we might understand those phenomena which Haar is concerned are ignored and marginalised by the assertion that animals lack language. Even so, on this reading we might have to accept the conclusion that "voice" would always have to be written in quotation marks. If it referred to calls of animals, then we could understand these perhaps if we learn to hear what is being said and transpose our disposition in the required way. Yet such a project would precisely take place for us in a world in which there is a circumspective and projective understanding, within a project of 'understanding the cries of animal.' Similarly, if the 'animal' voice belonged to a human being, if we hear a spontaneous cry of pleasure or pain, we understand this all the more readily and spontaneously in a projected world opened up to the horizon of benefit and harm, even justice and injustice.

Nevertheless, it might well be asked whether all of the phenomena which appear as the 'language' of animals can be fitted into the categories of 'enticing call' and 'warning'. This may seem to be a somewhat restrictive characterisation. The types of call are indicative of a quite formal conception of animal behaviour as bringing into and urging out of particular dispositions. This would not necessarily be a reductive understanding of animal cries, since such a conception could quite well deal with the huge variety of



grimaces, imitations, moans, which Haar reminds us of, together with less vocal animal language. Heidegger seems to adhere to the view that this formal conception of a double-aspect of animal behaviour will be able bear an adequate understanding of animality right up to the time of *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*. However, just as the notion of 'disinhibiting-ring' seemed finally to lock his understanding of living nature into a set of historical configurations of force and power which living beings are indeed 'captivated' by if we are unwilling to repeatedly question the notions which have informed it, so too even this highly original treatment of Aristotle's conception of animal voice and human speech will require a deconstruction if we are really to hear everything which living nature has to say to us. The question is not whether we *can* understand all animal voices as enticing calls and warnings, but whether in doing so we do *justice* to those voices and hear them in a way that is *fitting*?

With that question animal voices are granted entry into a *polis* for which, according to Giorgio Agamben, they have played a foundational metaphysical role as 'bare life.' For Agamben, Aristotle's foundation of politics on the separation of animal voice from human speech points towards the 'bare' animal life of man as an 'inclusive exception' and state of exception which founds the city and its laws:

The question "In what way does the living being have language?" corresponds exactly to the question "In what way does bare life dwell in the *polis*?" The living being has *logos* by taking away and conserving its own voice in it, even as it dwells in the *polis* by letting its own bare life be excluded as an exception within it.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>102</sup>Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), p.8

Here we seem to reach a point at which animal voices cry out for recognition within the walls of the city. They are ultimately our own cries of pleasure and pain, which are included only as an exception and thus inclusively excluded. Yet if, as we have insisted and Agamben repeatedly tries to show, 'bare life' is the result only of certain metaphysical machinations and need not be thought as the substrate of life upon which the *polis* is built and which modernity has allowed to take centre stage in the realm of the political with disastrous results, then the strict correspondence between the question of the language of living beings and their dwelling in the *polis* must take on an entirely different character. It is no longer a question of trying to recover our own voice from the state of exception to which it has been subjected, nor of teaching animal voices to speak the language of the city, but of learning to hear all that those voices might have to say if nature were to be recovered and freed into the language which is not the property of any one set of beings, the language at the source of that discursive speech which human beings imagine they have invented for themselves alone.

### **§17 Herder: From the Origin of Language to Harkening in the Clearing**

In the long history of thinking animality and language which has positioned itself on the site laid out by Aristotle, a site where the foundations of the city have been continually repositioned, where human beings and animals have been separated and re-conjoined within the continuum of nature, there are points at which, within this continuum, another language and another relation to living nature can be glimpsed. It is Herder's *Treatise on the Origin of Language* which provided Heidegger with some of the most promising hints at the reconfiguration of this particular metaphysical constellation.



In 1939, in the semester following his seminars dealing with Nietzsche's second *Untimely Meditation*, Heidegger held a graduate seminar on Herder's treatise. His preparatory notes and student reports on the meetings have been published under the title *On the Essence of Language: The Metaphysics of Language and the Essencing of the Word*. Johann Gottfried von Herder was a one time student of Kant's and has been extremely influential in various philosophical fields, but perhaps most especially in the development of the study of language. In 1772 he wrote a treatise on the origin of language which won the Berlin Academy prize. That inquiry into language was now orientated towards a question of *origin* had a significant effect, as we shall see in what follows. An Aristotelian metaphysics, which fell into the habit of simply positing language as the fundamental attribute of human beings and generally failing to draw out Aristotle's own phenomenological viewpoint, is supplemented and reorientated around this question of origin. It is no longer a question of seeing and understanding the distinct voice and speech of animals and human beings, but of raising the question of the *crossing over* from one to another, the genesis of the second in the first. Thus, the question of the origin of language is fundamentally wedded to the relation of human beings and animals. The origin of language, so understood, had recently preoccupied the French Enlightenment and Herder replies explicitly to the theses of Condillac and Rousseau on this topic in his treatise. Of their respective attempts to bridge the explanatory gap of 'origin' Herder complains, 'the former made animals into human beings, and the latter made human beings into animals.'<sup>103</sup> It is Herder's attempt to resist

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<sup>103</sup>Johann Gottfried Herder, 'Abhandlung Über den Ursprung der Sprache' in *Herder Werke, Frühe Schriften 1764-1772, Vol 1* (Frankfurt a.M.: Deutscher Klassiker, 1985) p.711 (Hereafter *Abhandlung*). I have consulted Michael N. Forster's English translation throughout. Although I have made frequent modifications to this translation I give page references to it following the German



these two alternatives whilst remaining open to the question of origin which in Heidegger's eyes gives his treatise the power to prepare a *crossing over* into and within language that will reorient the whole question of origins.

*i) Besonnenheit and Benommenheit: Reflective Awareness and the Animal Economy*

Herder begins his treatise on the origin of language with a claim which at once confirms its orientation towards a long metaphysical tradition and throws up a labyrinth of difficulties for that very same tradition: 'Already as animal the human being has language.'<sup>104</sup> The human being is thus, from the start, understood as animal. Yet this comes in the wake of an Aristotelian metaphysics, which understood language to be the distinguishing feature of the human being, that which marks us off from other animals. If human beings had language already as animals, then were they not already human beings and as distinct from animals as they would ever be? And if there is a general language of animality, of which human language is only one form, then how can it be language that properly distinguishes human beings from animals?

Herder treads the line between man and animal with great subtlety, but he also falls into the inevitable difficulties betrayed by his opening statement. He wishes to locate human language within a general language of animality and nature, developing from a language of cries and immediate expressions of pain and feeling. Those who place emphasis on this part of Herder's project may take exception to Heidegger's location of the treatise within the 'metaphysics' of language. Herder's great achievement, it will be claimed,

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reference. Johann Gottfried Herder, 'Treatise on the Origin of Language' in *Philosophical Writings*, ed. Michael N. Forster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) p.77 (Hereafter *Treatise*).

<sup>104</sup>*Abhandlung* p.696, *Treatise*, p.65

was to wrest the study of language away from the metaphysical and theological ground upon which it had been conducted hitherto. Herder gave us a naturalist, perhaps even materialist, account of the origin of language which paved the way for its proper scientific investigation. Why then, does Heidegger insist on locating the treatise within the 'metaphysics' of language? It cannot be denied that Herder takes a great deal of trouble to argue against the theory of the divine origin of language and that in this sense his account is not 'metaphysical.' Yet Heidegger has always argued that naturalist, materialist and generally 'scientific' philosophical accounts do not fall outside the realm of metaphysics. On the contrary, those explanatory accounts take their initiative from a metaphysical understanding of language.

The difficulty of placing Herder's project stems, according to Heidegger, from an ambiguity in our understanding of 'origin,' which was also present in the Greek word *archē*. The origin is both the origination (*Entstehung*) and the essence or nature (*Wesen*) of something. Metaphysics exists between these two origins, whilst scientific research tends more and more to subordinate essence to origination. Heidegger refers to Jacob Grimm's 1851 address 'On the Origin of Language' as an example of the grounding of the linguistic sciences upon precisely this one-sided development of the metaphysical question of origin.<sup>105</sup> This research now takes the historical and even experimental reconstruction of the origination of language in human beings to be the only rigorous approach to the question of origin. According to Heidegger these research programs, however successful, could never ultimately tell us anything about language which we did not in a sense already know. The result, known in advance, can only be confirmed, because the essence of language has been determined in advance. For example, we undertake an experiment (one which Grimm discusses but determines to be immoral):

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105 OEL, pp.87-89/103-106



'Two children abandoned in solitude, mute servants looking after them, would find some kind of communication, a kind of language. In this observation, we would see confirmed what we already know before, namely that language is denotative announcement.'<sup>106</sup>

Herder's treatise thus prefigures and initiates the research of the linguistic sciences. This is perhaps particularly true of the second division of his essay, where he attempts to outline four 'natural laws' which condition the development of language in human societies. But Heidegger's interest does not lie here and he all but ignores this second division. Heidegger is primarily interested in those points at which Herder's thought remains most thoroughly embroiled in its metaphysical heritage, where *origin* retains its ambiguity between essence and origination. It is there that we can see the continuing effect of this ambiguity in the metaphysical no-man's land between the animal and the human. In positioning human language within a more general animal language, Herder has nevertheless subscribed to a metaphysics which attempts to understand the human in terms of language and language in terms of the human. This becomes clear when Heidegger juxtaposes Herder's opening statement that, 'Already as animal the human being has language' with the statement following only a little later that: 'Human beings are for us the only creatures endowed with language that we know... they distinguish themselves precisely through language from all animals.'<sup>107</sup> The circularity generated by understanding language as originating in a general language of animality and at the same time as that which distinguishes the human being from all other animals is in no way to be understood as a flaw in Herder's approach. Rather, by bringing to light and refusing to elide this circular grounding at the heart of the metaphysics of language,

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106 OEL, p.172/211-212

107 OEL, p.3/3-4, cf. *Abhandlung*, p.711, *Treatise*, p.77



Herder is driven to search out its origin in a more essential way than was possible in all the subsequent achievements of linguistic and natural science, because he raises a question about what origin itself means. It is here that Heidegger sees the possibility of thinking language otherwise and in so doing inaugurating another relation between man and animal.

For Herder there had been something lacking in the thinking of animality and thus in the thinking of the origin of language, a topic which obsessed the French and increasingly the German Enlightenment. What was lacking was a basic point of view, from which animality in general could be thought and understood in relation to those animals which have language. Herder names the point of view which he puts forward the doctrine of 'animal spheres':

*Every animal has its circle, to which it belongs from its birth onwards, enters immediately, in which it remains lifelong and dies. But now it is strange, "the sharper the senses of the animal, the more wonderful its works of art (Kunstwerke) are, the smaller is its circle: the more specific and limited its works for art."<sup>108</sup>*

The term 'works of art' is to be taken in its broadest etymological sense. *Kunst* (art) derives from the same word group as *können* (to be able to), so we should understand Herder to be positing an inverse correlation between the breadth of an animal's sphere and the specificity and wonder of its abilities. Every animal has a circle which it is bound to throughout the course of its life, not after the fact of its being alive, but as the primary fact of its being alive. Within this circle the animal can sense certain things and

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<sup>108</sup>*Abhandlung*, p.712, *Treatise*, p.78

perform certain actions. The circles of animals can be larger or smaller, they can encompass more or less. The suggestion is that there is an inverse proportion between the breadth of the environing circle and the relative strength of the affects and effects which circulate within it. We can begin to think of this in terms of what are today understood as degrees of 'specialization' of living beings or the volume of their ecological niche. A bird of prey, for example, has a relatively enclosed circle and its sight and grip are proportionally sharp and strong. A scavenging bird may be able to kill, but its circle will be broader and its 'killer instinct', a phrase which could now be translated in terms of the specificity of the affective and effective circuitry of killing, relatively weak.

The basic point of view whereby living beings are understood in terms of their spheres of life is thus grounded in an understanding of life in general as forming a 'household of nature' or what Herder goes on to call a 'general animal economy.'<sup>109</sup> Heidegger himself finds the origin of this idea in Leibniz, and he argues that Herder is frequently less consistent than Leibniz in following through the implications of this point of view. However, one of the guiding principles of this view is captured in Herder's perfectly equivocal phrase, 'Nature gives no powers gratuitously.' (*Die Natur gibt keine Kräfte umsonst.*)<sup>110</sup> She gives no powers for free, but also nothing needlessly.

In chapter 2 I discussed the idea of an economy of nature and claimed that the law of economy has become a guiding norm for the metaphysics of nature and ecological science. I contrasted this economy to the open possibility of a true ecology which would not constantly subordinate living nature and the language by which we speak of it to the

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<sup>109</sup>*Abhandlung* p.716, *Treatise* p.82

<sup>110</sup>*Abhandlung* p.769, *Treatise* p.127

economic law of growth. We saw Heidegger's attempt to recover an aspect of the metaphysics of *dynamis* which would not be accounted for in this way, and thus a *dynamic* life which at the same time would resist economisation. In the following chapter we saw the spectrum of *dynamis* which was thus uncovered culminate in the extreme forms of violence and power. Finally, we turned to language and in particular the language with which we speak of and perhaps with and within living nature, as a possible site at which life can appear otherwise than as subjected to the self-empowering of power coupled with the humanisation of the world. It now appears that a simple appeal to ecology beyond economy is not enough because the metaphysics of language can and has enabled the subordination of the *logos* to the economy of nature. Nevertheless, within Herder's treatise it is not only this fateful possibility that comes to light but also other possibilities which are often overlooked by those intent on finding in Herder the origins of the scientific study of language and modern linguistics.

How does Herder think that the basic point of view of a general economy of animal spheres can help us to understand the origin of language? According to the law of inverse proportion the broader and more manifold the sphere of an animal, the weaker its abilities will be. Now human beings occupy a peculiar place in this economy:

Man has no uniform or narrow sphere, where only a single kind of work awaits him:- a world of occupations and determinations surrounds him-

His senses and organization are not sharpened for a single thing: he has a sense for everything and therefore for any one thing naturally a weaker and duller sense-



The powers of his soul are spread over the world; his representations are not directed towards a single thing: and with that he has *no artistic drive (Kunsttrieb), no artistic readiness (Kunstfertigkeit)*- and, one thing which is more especially relevant here, *no animal language*.<sup>111</sup>

The language which man already possessed as an animal was not the language of human beings. Within the economy which makes up the animal realm there is a language of cries which are emitted, but there is also a, '*dark sensual agreement of an animal species amongst themselves, about their determination, in the circles of their efficacy*'.<sup>112</sup> The circulation within the animal economy may well include cries and gestures, but these are only particular expressions of a general dark communication. The circle of the human being, on the other hand, is so broad it comes to a point at which it is removed from animal language and requires a language of its own.

It may seem strange that Herder attributes no 'artistic drive' nor 'artistic readiness' to human beings, since the argument is precisely concerned to establish the natural conditions in which human beings are driven to invent a language beyond the language of animality. This would include the natural conditions for the production of any 'artificial' language along with all that we more usually understand as art and artifice. But if we recall the broad sense of the term 'art' that Herder used to write of animal 'works of art', then we can make more sense of this claim. If the 'arts' in question are precisely the abilities which are sharpened to a greater or lesser extent in proportion to the scope of the animal sphere, then Herder's claim is that because human beings have

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<sup>111</sup>*Abhandlung*, p.713, *Treatise*, p.79

<sup>112</sup>*Ibid*

the widest possible sphere, a whole 'world' of relations and tasks, they have *no instinctually driven or ready-made abilities*. Human beings stand within the general animal economy, but they also stand out in it.

This thought is captured in Herder's claim that human beings are creatures of 'reflective awareness' (*Besonnenheit*). He insists upon the need for this new terminology in order to avoid any confusion with determinations of the human species through the attribution to it of particular 'powers of reason' and so forth. Reflective awareness is not a particular human ability, it is the essence of the human relation to its surrounding world and as such the ground of all human abilities. Although the term sounds as though it refers to a particular conscious act or ability which can accompany and have an effect upon consciousness, reflective awareness does not refer even to any particular type of awareness or consciousness which appears within the human sphere. Rather, the reverse is the case. Every kind of awareness and conscious act which belongs to human beings is such because it appears within the realm of reflective awareness. The so called 'higher' faculties down to most 'animal' motor reactions show up in the realm of 'freedom and clarity' designated by reflective awareness, the likes of which has never been seen before in the animal economy.

That this is Herder's unusual claim for reflective awareness becomes clear throughout the course of the treatise. He argues that even in his most sensual condition the human being still inhabits the realm of reflective awareness, whilst even in its least sensual condition the animal is always still animal and knows nothing of the clarity of reflective awareness.<sup>113</sup> Furthermore, human infants do not begin in the position of animals and gradually develop into beings with reflective awareness. Rather, even babies are

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<sup>113</sup>*Abhandlung*, p.721, *Treatise*, p.87

creatures of reflective awareness.<sup>114</sup> Clearly this does not mean that they have developed powers of reasoning and oration. But reflective awareness does not require that one has developed or can exercise any particular ability. It is the realm of freedom and clarity which the child already inhabits, a realm which, if it did not already inhabit, it would not be able to develop any of those particular abilities of reason and oration traditionally associated with language. Finally, Herder explicitly distinguishes between particular reflective acts (*Besinnung*) and the realm of reflective awareness (*Besonnenheit*).<sup>115</sup> It is only because human beings inhabit the realm of reflective awareness that they can develop particular reflective abilities and that they can and must develop language.

Human beings, Herder frequently insists, are built to invent language. God does not teach them language, for how would they understand his lessons if they were not already in possession of language? Nor does our language develop directly from the dark communications of the animal economy. Human beings invent language for themselves. Yet they do not simply invent language from nothing or from some sheer force of will or cleverness. The invention of language would then encounter similar difficulties as the learning of language from some divine source. Heidegger finds the problem succinctly posed by Wilhelm von Humboldt, a major inheritor and developer of the Herdian tradition: "The human being is only human through language; but in order to invent language he would already have to be human."<sup>116</sup> Clearly human beings learn languages and they also invent languages. But to invent language *per se*, this would be a task beyond any being which did not already inhabit language. So Heidegger suggests that we must understand this invention in a particular way. We find a clue in

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114 *Abhandlung*, p.719, *Treatise*, p.85

115 *Abhandlung*, p.771, *Treatise*, p.128

116 OEL, p.29/35-36



the word itself. In the German word for invention, *Erfindung*, Heidegger sees a root which suggests a discovery or finding: 'The Herdian expression "inventing" means: to find oneself into ones essence.'<sup>117</sup> We could add that the English 'in-vention' denotes a 'coming into,' in this case, entry into the realm of reflective awareness. Not that human beings simply discover language ready-made. Rather, human beings find their way into and find themselves inhabiting the dimension of language, which coincides with the dimension of freedom and clarity that Herder names reflective awareness.

Certainly, for many, reflective awareness will still sound too much like a mode of consciousness to be compared to Heidegger's thinking of human being.<sup>118</sup> Nevertheless, Heidegger reads reflective awareness as a dimension of freedom and clarity that human beings inhabit, which could well bear some comparison to what Heidegger earlier understood as Dasein's being-in-the-world, although of course the connotations of distanced reflection are very different to Heidegger's insistence upon involvement and care. The difficulty for Heidegger, at this stage, is not so much Herder's understanding of the being of human beings, but his attempt to maintain in parallel both his insight into the law of inverse proportion governing the economy of animal spheres and the idea that human beings inhabit a realm which proves to be completely different in kind.

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<sup>117</sup>OEL, 171, GA 85, 210. We should recall that this had been Heidegger's understanding of the 'invention' of specifically human abilities since at least 1935, when he interpreted Sophocles' term *edidaxato* not as, 'human beings invented' but that they, 'found their way into the overwhelming and therein first found themselves.' See § 13 above. Grimm's German Dictionary tells us that early users made no sharp distinction between the verbs *to invent* (*erfinden*) and *to discover* (*entdecken*), *Grimm Deutsches Wörterbuch*, vol. 3 (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1862), p. 798

<sup>118</sup>This is where Charles Taylor, for example, locates the major parting of ways between Herder and Heidegger. 'Heidegger, Language and Ecology', in *Heidegger: A Critical Reader*, ed. Hubert L. Dreyfus and Harrison Hall (Cambridge, Mass: Blackwell, 1992), 256

Herder is clear that it is a difference in kind which is at issue: '[...] the human race does not stand more or less above the animal in terms of *level*, but in *kind*.'<sup>119</sup> Yet if the law of inverse proportion is supposed to function as some kind of explanatory principle for the development of human language in the realm of reflective awareness, how does this fit with the idea that the human sphere is different in kind? Is the human world an animal circle broadened to the point of breaking? And if it breaks open, how are we to understand the event of that break or in-cision in the animal economy? Perhaps without being aware of it Herder has already prevented us from understanding this incision properly. As Heidegger suggests in one of his classes: 'If essential distinction means: to be a different kind, which cannot be determined through that of the animal, one could say, then Herder should not start with "small circle"- "big circle," but should pose the distinction: circle- no-circle.'<sup>120</sup>

Heidegger's line of questioning can perhaps be better understood if we compare this reading of Herder with his own attempt to think the essence of animality in *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*. There Heidegger had drawn upon contemporary biological research to try to broach the question of animality. Above all, it will be recalled, he was influenced by the radically ecological standpoint of Jakob von Uexküll. Very much along the lines of Herder's animal spheres, Uexküll maintained that biology needs to take as its fundamental point of view the *Umwelt*, the surrounding-world, which every living being weaves around itself. Different species of animal inhabit completely different surrounding-worlds because their affective-effective circuit of life is different. However, this is not a purely physiological circuit which relays meaningless impulses. What is important is the carrying of a mark throughout the entire circuit of

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<sup>119</sup>*Abhandlung*, p.716, *Treatise*, p.81

<sup>120</sup> OEL, p. 146/174 -translation modified.



perception and behaviour. This turns out to be a semiotic biology, understanding stimulus as meaningful mark or sign, which only gains its full meaning in the context of the entire circuit. Herder seems to anticipate this theory in rough outline with his description of the general significance of 'dark animal communication' for understanding not just part of animal life, but life as such. For Uexküll, although we know little directly about the surrounding-worlds of animals, it is the task of the biologist to try to think her way into those alien worlds. Human beings also inhabit surrounding-worlds and it is partly the specificity of our own world which makes the task of thinking our way into those of other animals so difficult.

Yet for Heidegger, Uexküll had still not discovered the real difficulty of the situation. It is not simply that our own specific functional circle of interests blinds us to those of the animal. It is because we do not inhabit an environment in this sense at all that thinking the life of living beings is so difficult. In fact, it is inappropriate to attribute a surrounding-world (*Umwelt*) to animals. The surrounding-world is, for Heidegger, the world of Dasein in its everyday appearance. For within the animal environment there are no beings 'as such and as a whole,' as there are undergirding the human world even when that world makes itself known to us. There is no manifestation of beings at all. It is not simply that different kinds of beings show up for the animal, but beings are not manifest as beings at all. The temptation, if not the utter inevitability, is for us to try to think of the animal sphere in terms of the beings which appear in it. This would then be the deepest root of an 'anthropomorphism' which is not simply an insidious self-regard. It is not the preoccupation with our own circle of interests and projection of them on to the animal which lies at the root of the problem, but the fact that the very ground for all human ability to 'transpose' ourselves into other worlds is our inhabiting a world of



utterly different character to that of animals.

We are now in a position to shed some further light on Heidegger's disputed thesis that the animal is 'poor in world', in the context of Herder's inception of the fundamental point of view of animal spheres. As we saw, Heidegger's thought is easily misunderstood and indeed, taken for the very opposite of its intended break with a general animal economy. The misunderstanding arises because Heidegger takes the determination of animal worlds as 'poor,' a term which is used by both Herder and Uexküll, but understands this thesis in an utterly different manner. Although Herder does not appear by name in *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, it is instructive to compare his own determination of animality as 'poor' with that of Uexküll and Heidegger. Herder argues that it is man that is the 'poorest' of animals in both instinct and ability, since his life circle is so wide his instinct is weak and full of gaps and shortcomings.<sup>121</sup> It is in this very poverty of instinct that we find the origin of language in the compensating gift of reflective awareness. Since they do not leave the economy of nature altogether, even if they dwell in a light beyond of the darkness of animality, human beings require language as a kind of compensation for their poverty of instinct. Here, poverty refers to the relative weakness of the affects and effects in the human being's life sphere compared to that of animals. Uexküll, on the other hand, uses the reverse designation, describing the world of the tick as necessarily poor, yet in a way which clearly betrays his adherence to an economy of nature almost identical to Herder's:

The whole rich world around the tick shrinks and changes into a scanty framework consisting, in essence, of three receptor cues and three effector

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<sup>121</sup>*Abhandlung*, pp. 714-715/ *Treatise*, pp.80-81

cues- her *Umwelt*. But the very poverty of this world guarantees the unfailing certainty of her actions, and security is more important than wealth.<sup>122</sup>

Here poverty refers to the relative limitedness of the animal world, which is compensated for by what Herder would have called 'strength of instinct.' This designation of poverty is simply the inverse of Herder's, resulting from an identical law of inverse proportion between breadth of environment and strength of instinct.

Heidegger's understanding of animal 'poverty' is very different. Here it is not a question of designating the relative strength or breadth of the animal circle, but of indicating that the animal world is utterly different in kind to that of the human being. The 'poverty' in question now exists between man and animal, not as a relative proportion, but as an attempt to indicate a relation which can exist between the two only as an abyssal difference. Poverty still determines the animal just as much as human beings, because it marks an attempt to open and maintain our thought in the abyss which lies between them. Yet poverty no longer marks a position within the general economy of nature, but a relation removed from that economy altogether.

Despite his grounding of the doctrine of animal spheres in a general animal economy

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<sup>122</sup>Jakob von Uexküll, 'A stroll through the worlds of animals and men: A picture book of invisible worlds', *Semiotica* 89-4: 325. Although this book was originally published in 1934 and therefore had not yet appeared when Heidegger wrote *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, it is one of the most readily available and clearest introductions to Uexküll's thought in English. However, it should be noted that Giorgio Agamben has recently argued that some of Uexküll's later remarks might be used to call Heidegger's approach into question. Giorgio Agamben, *The Open: Man and Animal*, trans. Kevin Attell (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), p. 47

and ultimately in the continuum of nature, Heidegger does think that we can find in Herder's treatise some intimation of a very different relation to animality, one which itself requires a reorientation in our thinking of the origin of language. Language would then no longer be maintained as the differentiating factor between man and animal. Harkening to language as itself the abyss which opens between man and animal would allow it to serve as a site at which a more appropriate relation to the animal can take place. That cannot be done by beginning within the animal economy and then removing ourselves and perhaps attempting to drag the rest of living nature out behind us. Instead of looking for language's point of origination in a pre-established animal economy, if we hearken to language we may hear in it the silent origin of both language and the presencing of nature. By beginning with and attending to language itself, we need no longer understand language as compensation demanded by nature's economy, but as a gift, a true gratuity. We might then be able to hear in the gift of language the words to help us preserve the gift of nature.

*ii) From Harkening to the Clearing*

At the point that Herder turns his discussion towards what takes place in human language, thus apparently turning away from animal languages, Heidegger thinks that he can discern the marks of a decisive incision into the general course of the argument which will turn out to have important implications for our understanding of the relation of human beings to living nature. Herder's thought moves towards something that he himself cannot comprehend in its full ramifications. This is the point at which he discusses the importance of the sense of hearing for the origin of language.



Hearing, Herder claims, is the sense which allows for the invention of language. It is through hearing that man can, 'sense the language of nature which teaches, and without this cannot invent language: so hearing has become in a certain way the middle of his senses, the proper door to the soul and the band which connects the other senses.'<sup>123</sup> Herder goes on to explain that hearing is to be understood as the 'middle sense,' the sense between touch and sight, in six distinct ways: Firstly, in its 'sphere of sensibility from the outside', that is, the range at which it can take things in; secondly, the clarity and distinctness of tones falls between the dull sensations of touch and the sharpness of vision; thirdly, the sensations of hearing are a median with respect to their liveliness; fourthly, with respect to the duration of their effect; fifthly, with respect to their need to find a means to express themselves and finally, Herder speculates, the sense of hearing develops in human beings between the sense of touch and the sense of sight.

Each of these points can be challenged in various ways. Is it not the case, for example, that in a dark wood or at night the 'sphere' of the sense hearing is greater than sight? Or, as Heidegger remarks, when we hear *London now* on the radio, do we not hear something at a distance which we could never see?<sup>124</sup> This kind of criticism would miss the point entirely, because Herder is not making claims about the measurable distance involved, nor about that measurable clarity of sound or its actual development. What Herder is pointing us towards is, Heidegger argues, 'the *kind* of possession that perceives. In hearing a *nearing*.'<sup>125</sup> Thus, we should not be content to set to work clarifying and refuting each of Herder's points, but try to attend to what binds them together as a characterization and indication of something which itself binds together all

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<sup>123</sup> *Abhandlung*, p.746, *Treatise*, p.108

<sup>124</sup> OEL, p.104/121

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid*

our senses. This is the character of the 'in-between' which Herder senses is so important for understanding language: 'What Herder *senses* with the "middle" character of "hearing" is the in-between and in the midst of the *clearing*.'<sup>126</sup>

Despite his clear insight that reflective awareness is not a particular ability, but rather a way of 'having' abilities, Herder remained entangled in the thought of origination which constantly tends to understand language as a particular ability which has its conditions of origination in other abilities. Thus he ascribes the experience of the middle, of being in the midst, to a particular sensory ability: hearing. Nevertheless, Herder did not remain the complete prisoner of the thought of origination. That is why he was able to say that, 'We become, so to speak, hearing through all our senses!'<sup>127</sup> The experience of standing out in the midst of nature, of attending to and 'hearing' the sounds and voices of nature, has ultimately no more to do with the particular sensory ability of hearing than sight or touch. Hearing may give us a first sense of this hearkening, but it is only if we begin in the middle and in the midst that we first gain this *sense* of perception.

What exactly are we supposed to 'hear' in this hearkening? Perhaps the whole cacophony of nature? All of the multitude of sounds and tones which surround us? In particular, are we to hearken to the 'dark' language of the animal world, the cries and screams, songs, cooing, lowing and bleating of animals? Does the origin of language lie in 'hearkening' to this, the dark precursor of the revelatory word? An example which recurs at several points in Herder's text is the bleating of a sheep. Do we not learn language from the sounds and tones of nature itself, by hearing the 'baah' of a sheep and then fixing this as a mark of recognition, effectively saying, 'You are the one who

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126 OEL, p.96/113

127 *Abhandlung* p.747, *Treatise*, p.109. cf. OEL, p.93/109

bleats!'"? Only if, Heidegger claims, we can attend to what occurs between the tone of the animal and the 'baah' of a child who recognizes it, do we hearken to what is essential to language. Only if we can attend to the silence between the tone and the word. What do we hear in silence, in the silencing of language between the language of nature and the language of man? A simple break in the pattern of sound? A silent punctuating mark which can say more than words? Or something else altogether, perhaps the, 'ground of the "sound"'? or even abyssal-ground?'<sup>128</sup> In that silence we begin to hearken to the essencing (*Wesung*) of the word. It is no longer a question of identifying the ambiguity in the investigation of origins and negotiating the terrain between origination (*Entstehung*) and essence (*Wesen*). The essencing of the word is an event of presencing in the clearing, 'in the midst' of nature. Man and animal are joined here otherwise than in the continuum of nature. In the silent essencing of the word and the presencing of nature, they are joined in an event which allows them to belong together in radical disjuncture.

### §18 The Disjunction of *Physis* and *Logos* in Truth

Our task is now to gain a better understanding of the belonging together in disjuncture of nature and language. That should allow us to see how this issue is linked to two central concerns of this thesis: firstly, to see how this connective disjuncture of nature and language opens the relation of human beings and animality to being constituted otherwise; secondly, to see how these renewed possibilities rely upon the 'withdrawal' or 'poverty' of being which is now said to take place as the *silencing* of the word and what I understand to be a corresponding *recovery* of nature.

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128 OEL, p. 93/109



Is language, then, a natural phenomenon? Already in the introduction to *Being and Time* Heidegger had pointed toward an affinity of *phenomena* and *logos*, such that the 'showing itself from itself' of a phenomenon and the 'letting be seen' of that which is spoken of in *logos*, allow for 'phenomenology' not as a doctrine or science of phenomena, but a letting be seen of that which shows itself. Nevertheless, despite the common endeavour of manifestation in nature and the revelation of the word there was something in the phenomena which withdrew. Not some being which remained obstinately hidden, nor something remaining 'behind' the phenomena, but the *being*, the very prevailing of the phenomena. (BT, 51-51/28-35)

In *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics* Heidegger reminds us that he now understands the connection of *physis* and *logos* as something which can only be understood within the point of view opened up by the recovery of the Greek understanding of truth:

The Greek concept of truth presented here manifests to us an intimate connection between the prevailing of beings, their concealment, and man. Man as such, insofar as he exists, in the *logos* tears *physis*, which strives to conceal itself, from concealment and thus brings beings to their truth.

[...]This word for truth [*alētheia*] in antiquity is a primal word precisely on account of its 'negativity'. It testifies that truth is a fate of the finitude of man and, so far as the philosophy of antiquity is concerned, has nothing to do with the harmlessness and indifference of proven propositions.

(FCM, 29-30/44-45)

We see here the gestation of the role which man will play in *Introduction to Metaphysics*. It is important to note that his being bound up in this strife of *logos* and *physis* in truth is precisely the mark of man's *finitude* in antiquity. We have been witness to the overwhelming violence that occurs when in the course of the history of being this finitude falls out of view.

That which withdraws in truth is given the name *physis*. Heidegger cites and interprets a fragment from Heraclitus to which he will often return:

*'physis...kruptesthai philei'*. "The prevailing of things has in itself a striving to conceal itself." You can here see the innermost connection between concealment and *physis*, and at the same time the connection between *physis* and *logos* as revealing.

(FCM, 27/ 41)

*Physis* is the prevailing of the whole. As such it is connected to *logos* as revealing. Yet in this very revelation it continues to conceal itself. The *prevailing* of that which prevails, the 'inner law' of prevailing things, strives for concealment. Yet, if the connection between *physis* and *logos* is revealed in the light of the recovery of truth thought as unconcealment (*Unverborgenheit*), it will not be enough simply to recognise the Greek term *alētheia* as the root of this connective disjuncture. We must follow in somewhat greater detail precisely how nature and language are placed in a disjunctive connection in the truth, so as to see how it is that only a turning in the truth itself can

transform the relation between language and nature.

Towards the end of *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics* Heidegger focuses our attention on the point in Greek thought where the *disjunction* between *logos* and *physis* came to prevail over their connection. In the course of a detailed analysis of Aristotle's understanding of *logos apophantikos*, the 'propositional statement', which is intended to fill out the third 'guiding thesis' of the second course of lectures, that man is 'world-building', Heidegger summarises Aristotle's position on natural beings and *logos* as follows:

Aristotle states: *logos* is not *physei*, is not some product of a physical event or process; it is not anything like digestion or the circulation of the blood, but has its *genesis* in something quite different: not *physei* but *kata synthēkēn*. Corresponding to this is that part of the earlier theory of the *logos* which says that language is *thesei*: Words do not grow, they do not occur and form like organic processes, but are what they are on the basis of reaching an agreement.

(FCM, 309/447)

Here we find the root of long standing distinctions, in particular, the distinction between the natural and the conventional or 'agreed upon', real and symbolic, nature and culture. Notice that it is no longer *physis* itself which is at stake here, but natural beings and processes, *physei on*. Words are not natural beings, they do not unfold from out of themselves, they do not have the principle of their growth and movement in themselves.



Here the Heraclitean *physis* as the prevailing of beings as such and as a whole and the *logos* as the very revealing and making manifest of that prevailing has been resolved into a question of distinguishing and classifying beings. This is one tendency which crystallised in the Aristotelian determination of propositional statements.<sup>129</sup> However, this should not lead us to think that in the works of Aristotle we find only the dismemberment of that which should belong together, nature and language. Heidegger always thinks it is possible to read against the grain and recover other tendencies at work. Furthermore, the dispersal of nature and language was a possibility that was already present in their belonging together in a more 'primordial' understanding. It is not a question of fusing nature and language back together. Not a question, as I said before, of logisicing nature or naturalising language. It is a question of finding our way into an event whereby they can belong together in disjunction. That is the event of truth, an event which can take place otherwise than it has done in its first inception.

In order to get a better idea of precisely what this means and to guard against certain influential misunderstandings it will be helpful to contrast this reading with that of an important and powerful interpretation of Heidegger's significance for ecological thought, that of Michael E. Zimmerman. Zimmerman first formulated some of his views about the potential for developing a Heideggerian 'ēthos' in 'deep ecology' in 1983.<sup>130</sup> A decade later, after a great deal of historical and philosophical debate had been initiated concerning Heidegger's involvement with National Socialism, Zimmerman rethought

<sup>129</sup> That *logos* and *physis* once formed a 'unity', but then 'step apart' and are finally completely detached from one another, is a constant and pervasive theme for Heidegger once he begins to explicitly formulate these occurrences in terms of a 'history of being'. See, e.g. IM p.130/94 for the unity of the two and IM p.190/136 for the process of disjunction.

<sup>130</sup> Michael Zimmerman, 'Towards a Heideggerian *Ethos* for Radical Environmentalism' 5,2 (1983) 99-

his position and became more skeptical of the ecological potential to be found in Heidegger's thought.<sup>131</sup> Since then Zimmerman has continued to develop nuanced readings of Heidegger's work in this light, finding both rich material for ecological thought, but also various obstacles for an ecological reading. Most importantly for our purposes, I think it can be shown that Zimmerman develops an important intuition about the duplicity or 'ambiguity' which remains in Heidegger's understanding of *physis*. However, because he misidentifies this ambiguity many of his criticisms and concerns remain misplaced. I will go on to argue that by establishing a more plausible reading of the disjunctive connection between *physis* and *logos*, we can discern that: a) Heidegger's thinking of the joining of *physis* and *logos* does indeed result in an ambiguity in his conception of animality and living nature that is not fully addressed; b) nevertheless, far from being an obstacle, it is the 'duplicity' of Heidegger's thinking of *physis* that must form the core of any ecological reading of his work.

Zimmerman first presents the ambiguity that he finds in Heidegger's conception of *physis* in his work of 1990 *Heidegger's Confrontation with Modernity: Technology, Politics, Art*. It continues to inform many of his recent criticisms of Heidegger as an ecological thinker. In the early work the ambiguity is presented in terms of two guiding senses of the term *physis*: 'The first aspect of *physis*, an entity's self-emerging, would seem to be in some measure independent of the second aspect of *physis*, the appearing and presencing of an entity within a historical world.'<sup>132</sup> Here he names the two aspects of *physis*, its self-emergence and its appearance in a historical world, 'ousia-logical' and

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131Michael Zimmerman, 'Rethinking the Heidegger-Deep Ecology Relationship' in *Environmental Ethics* 15,3 (1993) 195-224

132Heidegger's *Confrontation with Modernity: Technology, Politics and Art* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990) p.224



'*alētheia*-logical' respectively. He then argues that in *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics* we find an investigation of an 'ontological power' of self-emergence and self-production of living beings which can and should remain independent of our understanding of the way in which those beings appear in an historical world. Against William F. Vallicella, Zimmerman argues that although Heidegger moves to eliminate the first sense in favour of the second sense in his later work, because he simultaneously moves to make the site of presencing, *Da-sein*, no longer wholly co-extensive with 'human being', the remnants of the first sense can be found throughout his work, albeit in a problematic and insufficiently clear relation to the second sense.

There are various problems with the terminology that Zimmerman uses to present this argument, which in turn lead us on to underlying misconceptions. Firstly, it is a peculiar choice, if not a complete disaster, to denote that aspect of *physis* which refers to self-emergence as 'ousia-logical'. One of Heidegger's absolutely central arguments is that, for all of the complex intricacies of the Greek questioning of being, *ousia* is an understanding of being as presence (*Anwesenheit*).<sup>133</sup> Now although *ousia* has a tendency towards the thinking of being as constantly present and the forgetting of presencing, the very notion of substance is from the first bound up with the presencing and manifestation that Zimmerman associates with the second '*alētheia*-logical' aspect of *physis*. The redeployment of *ousia* in the way Zimmerman attempts would require a fundamental challenge to the idea that *ousia* must be understood within the horizon of time, precisely because it is a conception of being as constant presence which cannot be upheld within a more primordial interpretation of temporality.

Secondly, we should note the surreptitious presence of *logos* in Zimmerman's

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<sup>133</sup> See, for example, BT, p.47/ 25



identification of an ambiguity in the concept of *physis*. Whilst *physis* is taken as the guiding concept, *alētheia* takes place in only one aspect of *physis*. What, then, of the *logos* which lets what shows itself be seen? It is not explicitly given a place in this scheme, but we might surmise that it should be placed on the 'presencing' alētheic side of the divide within *physis*. However, by naming each aspect 'ousia-logical' and 'alētheia-logical', Zimmerman inadvertently makes *logos* co-extensive with his guiding concept of *physis*. Even the 'independent' self-emergence of natural beings is connected to a *logos* which draws it into the presencing of an historical world. Now it might be argued that this need not be the case and that this connection is only made when phenomenology attempts to bring to light what might have taken place without any illumination. Nevertheless, this is another reason for us to remain vigilant when unfolding the consequences of the Zimmerman's interpretation.

In *Contesting Earth's Future: Radical Ecology and Postmodernity* Zimmerman takes up this critique of what he sees as an ambiguous concept of *physis*, but now presents it as part of a reading of Michel Haar's interpretation of the concept of earth.<sup>134</sup> Zimmerman seems to realise here that for Heidegger, if there are two 'aspects' to *physis*, then they are inseparable dimensions of an event of presencing and not in principle 'independent' as he had previously suggested. The *alētheia*-logical aspect is now identified with the 'world' of the *Origin of the Work of Art*, whilst the *ousia*-logical is identified with the earth. Following Haar's reading, Zimmerman suggests that although these dimensions may be aspects of the same presencing, there is in the earth something which does not come to light in any historical world, a dimension irreducible to historicity and itself non-epochal. As we saw in chapter 3, however, the resistance to complete disclosure in

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134 Michael Zimmerman, *Contesting Earth's Future: Radical Ecology and Postmodernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994) p.129

any historical world does not entail that one can speak of the earth itself as non-historical. On the contrary, unlike our usual concept of *nature*, the earth is historical through and through, because in resisting complete disclosure in any one world or epoch it is nevertheless drawn into history. To speak of the earth at all is to speak of the earth in an historical world, even if the earth cannot be fully integrated into that world.

More recently, in an essay entitled 'Heidegger's Phenomenology and Contemporary Environmentalism', Zimmerman has again taken up his double aspect theory of *physis* and pointed towards further obstacles for a 'green' interpretation of Heidegger's phenomenology.<sup>135</sup> Some of the problematic terminology is replaced but the basic distinction remains the same: '*physis* somehow means both the self-manifesting of beings within the clearing and the process whereby an organism unfolds its own structure in the life-process. Heidegger never adequately reconciles these two aspects of *physis*.'<sup>136</sup> This lack of clarity then seems to be left somewhat to one side to make way for what Zimmerman sees as a decisive challenge to ecological readings of Heidegger's understanding of the history of being. However, I think it can be shown that it is the lack of clarity concerning Heidegger's understanding of *physis* that makes this challenge possible.

The central challenge is that a careful reading of the Heidegger's history of being will reveal that Heidegger's own thought is, 'consistent with modernity's project of the

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135 Michael Zimmerman, 'Heidegger's Phenomenology and Contemporary Environmentalism' in Charles S Brown and Ted Toadvine, ed. *Eco-Phenomenology: Back to the Earth Itself* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2003) pp. 73-101

136 Ibid p.85



technological domination of nature.<sup>137</sup> That in itself, of course, would not amount to a decisive challenge since it is certainly true that Heidegger is constantly involved in an excavation of the philosophical grounds of that domination. If technology is, 'the fulfillment of metaphysics' then philosophy itself moves in this element, so it is certain that thinking will generally be 'consistent' with technological domination and indeed consist of a thought which underpins that domination. Zimmerman's challenge, however, is to suggest that ultimately Heidegger cannot and does not provide any resistance to that domination, but rather he finds it to be inevitable and irresistible. This challenge is made on the basis of an essay by Thomas Sheehan in which a distinction is made between two types of nihilism, that of the technological domination of nature in modernity and the 'essential' nihilism of the withdrawal of being in a clearing which makes room for all historical presencing.<sup>138</sup> If the 'essence' of nihilism itself cannot be overcome and is itself the condition of the possibility of technological nihilism then how is any resistance to be found in the essence of nihilism, in Ereignis, to complete technological disclosure? And if no resistance is to be found then is not Heidegger's thought indeed 'consistent' with the technological domination of nature, does it not in fact make it inevitable and even demand and require it?

In order to meet this challenge, or rather, to resist being drawn into a mode of thought which continually challenges forth, we must return to the so-called ambiguity in *physis*.<sup>139</sup> Zimmerman is partially correct in his intuition that there is a fundamental

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137 Ibid p.86

138 Ibid p.86-87. For a more somewhat more variegated analysis of different 'nihilisms', which makes a similar distinction but does not draw the same conclusions see, Miguel de Beistegui *Heidegger and Politics: Dystopias* (London: Routledge, 1998) pp.67-86

139 In an excellent and provocative essay Iain Thomson also refuses to accept the basis for Zimmerman's challenge. He does so by insisting that Heidegger during the period of the *Contributions* does have a



duplicity in *physis*, but his misidentification of where that duplicity lies leads his interpretation astray. Rather than seeing *alētheia* as one aspect and self-emergence (whether wholly or partially independent of manifestation) as the other, it is *alētheia* that is indeed the guiding notion. It is under the sway of truth as unconcealment that *physis* has been understood and interpreted. *Alētheia* has guided the interpretations of nature and of language throughout the history of metaphysics, whilst never itself being brought under interrogation, since it remained the most obvious and unquestioned realm within such interpretations could be carried out. If we take *alētheia* as our guiding notion, then we can see that in the discussion of Heraclitus in *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, *physis* and *logos* are essentially connected because they both participate in the event of unconcealing. It is *physis* and *logos* which then name different aspects of that event. *Physis* places the emphasis on the concealment inherent

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notion of 'being as such' which differs significantly from the meaning being sought in *Being and Time*.

This choice of term, which I take to refer to what Heidegger more usually indicates with the term *beyng* and later with crossed out 'being', could be somewhat misleading. Nevertheless, the point is similar, although I would not go so far as to say, as Thomson does, that Zimmerman makes no room for what Heidegger thinks in the withdrawal of 'being as such'.

Thomson goes on to deal with the 'ethical question of animality' by attempting to variegate what he sees as a 'simplistic' tripartite division of beings in *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics* into a 'continuum' of nature approaching closer and closer to *Dasein*. Whilst this is an interesting attempt to answer a worry which has motivated a number of critics, I would argue that it not only completely misses the point of the phenomenology of living nature as I have elaborated it in chapter 1, but it is also in danger of reinstating a metaphysical 'chain of being' with certain constantly present properties making up the 'rich world' of *Dasein*. Since Thomson then suggests that perhaps there could be beings which have 'even richer worlds' than *Dasein*, he is seriously in danger of advocating the full reinstatement of a chain of being. See, Iain Thomson, 'Ontology and Ethics at the Intersection of Phenomenology and Environmental Philosophy' in *Inquiry*, 47, 380-412 (Taylor and Francis 2004) p.398 & 402

in unconcealing, whilst *logos* emphasises the tearing out of concealment and bringing into presence which takes place in truth. In *physis* there could never be pure closure nor in *logos* could ever be a pure disclosure, it is a matter of existing in the duality of the event. *Physis, a-lētheia, Da-sein; Logos, a-lētheia, Da-sein.*

If we recall the project of *Contributions to Philosophy (From Ereignis)*, which we began to explore in the preceding chapter, then it will be clear that it is the possibility of hearing a shift in emphasis which is absolutely vital for Heidegger. He writes that the 'originary grounding question of Da-sein can be unfolded historically: 1. proceeding from *alētheia* as the grounding character of *physis*.' (CP, 215/306) *Alētheia* is the grounding character of *physis*. Our interpretation of the grounding question which Heidegger posed there showed that in the first beginning the emphasis had already been placed on the *dis*-closure of the concealed. So that whilst concealment remained it was already in itself thought as that which is ready for disclosure. In this sense it might be said that the history of metaphysics has been the history of the logicisation of nature. Another beginning would not be a beginning which simply starts elsewhere and thinks outside or beyond the first beginning. Another beginning would *think through* the first beginning. In a sense it would be an attempt to re-naturalise nature. Better, it would be an attempt to hear a shift or turn within *alētheia* as the grounding character of both *physis* and *logos*, so that we can attend to the closure and preservation which is inherent in truth itself. In the turning from unconcealment (*Unverborgenheit*) to *dis*-closure (*Entbergung*) begins the *recovery* of nature.

In 1939, the same year in which the Herder seminars took place, Heidegger wrote an essay on 'The Essence and Concept of *Physis* in Aristotle's Physics, B,1.'<sup>140</sup> In Aristotle's

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<sup>140</sup> PM, pp.183-230/239-301. For an extensive commentary on this essay which brings out *sterēsis* as the



text he finds an interpretation of the twofold nature of *physis* and begins to trace a line of interpretation that has missed what is truly appropriate to this twofold nature. It is towards the end of the chapter in question that Aristotle speaks of the twofold nature of *physis* and moreover links it essentially to the concept of *sterēsis*, privation. Heidegger's translation reads: 'However, the self-placing into appearance- and therefore *physis* as well- is spoken *in two ways*, for 'privation' too is something like appearance.'<sup>141</sup> It is in the question of privation and a certain orientation towards privation that *physis* can be questioned in its ground, as we saw also to be the case for *dynamis* in an earlier reading of Aristotle. The 'privation' in question is not a negation but a certain way in which some things come to presence, the presencing of what is absent: 'In *sterēsis*, "privation," (*Beraubung*) it is a matter of "taking something away" by a kind of saying-it-away. *Sterēsis* certainly refers to an "away," but always and above all it means something falls away, remains away, becomes absent (*abwest*).'<sup>142</sup> By 'saying-it-away' we do not bring it into presence as if it were standing in front of us. We find in language the possibility of bringing absence to presence without dispelling absence or tearing it away from the closure of nature altogether.

In this notion of 'privation'- the poverty which has been our guiding thread- the grounding of *physis* might be initiated. For the kernel of the twofold nature of *physis* can be found in the duplicity of privation. As a taking away, 'privation' is literally a stealing away (*Beraubung*). It is in these terms that Heidegger elucidates the privative

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heart of Aristotle's 'twofold' understanding of being and which goes on to link this to the important part which *sterēsis* plays in the analysis of *dynamis* in the 1931 lectures on *Metaphysics* Theta, see.

Walter A. Brogan, *Heidegger and Aristotle: The Twofoldness of Being* (Albany: SUNY, 2005)

141 PM 225/294

142 PM, p.226/296



'a-' of alētheia in *Being and Time*. Truth must be stolen from, even torn away from concealment, it is a 'kind of robbery'. (BT, 265/222) Privation thus refers to the disclosure of truth. On the other hand, *sterēsis* can also point us towards the withdrawal in being, to the concealing which takes place in all presencing, rather than the dispelling of closure and preservation. If robbery tears absence into presence, presence may also steal away into absence. We could not then be content with an interpretation of *physis* that emphasises the kinetic, dynamic 'self-emergence' of nature from out of itself, whether or not this might be 'independent' of manifestation. Rather, it is this 'self-emergence' which has constantly guided metaphysics. From this self-emergence we need to recover a movement back into itself; the recalcitrance of nature, and perhaps above all of living nature:

Nonetheless, in essentially "being-on-the-way," each being that is *produced* or put *forth* (excluding artifacts) is also put *away*, as the blossom is put away by the fruit. But in the putting *away*, the self-placing into the appearance- *physis*- does not cease to be. On the contrary, the plant in the form of fruit goes back into its seed, which, according to its essence, is nothing other than a going-forth into the appearance, *hodos physeos eis physin*. With its very coming-to-life every living thing already begins to die, and conversely, dying is but a kind of living, because only a living being has the ability to die.

(PM, 227/297-298)

*Physis* is not only the emergence from out of themselves of natural and living beings,

but it is their simultaneous and ineluctable return into themselves. Coming forth is at the very same time a passing away. That is what is forgotten in the first beginning, struck with wonder as it is at the products which nature has brought forth.

This shift in emphasis or turning within truth should not be mistaken for the advocacy of a disclosure which could remain innocent before nature. A *recovered* nature, a nature re-naturalised, would not be left to remain in the depths of its own hiding places. On the contrary, it is only within a mode of disclosure in which beings as a whole and as such are ready prepared for discovery, in which they stand in reserve ready to be put to work, that a pure passivity over and against nature can reign. Once nature has been turned into pure objectivity, as standing reserve that no longer even stands over and against a subject, the absolute domination of nature has nothing to distinguish it from an absolutely non-violent and pacifist relation to nature. Truth no longer needs to be torn from nature because nature has already been prepared for unconcealment. We need to be careful not to confuse the pacifism that masks an already complete act of domination with a turning in the truth which would allow us to discover nature whilst at the same time sheltering it and releasing it into its own self-sheltering. A *recovery* of nature would require that disclosure itself become at the same time sheltering.

At the end of the *physis* essay Heidegger returns to the Heraclitean fragment with which we began this section. He makes it clear that what is involved in allowing nature its propensity towards concealment which I have been calling the *recovery* of nature, is not an occultism of nature; not a giving over of nature into obscurity, nor a reaction to enlightenment. Such an occult would miss completely the mystery of nature. Rather, it is a question of turning truth towards self-hiding in its self-emergence:

“Being loves to hide itself.” What does this mean? It has been suggested, and still is suggested that this fragment means being is difficult to get at and requires great efforts to be brought out of its hiding place and, as it were, purged of its self-hiding. But what is needed is precisely the opposite. Self-hiding belongs to the predilection (*Vor-liebe*) of being; i.e., it belongs to that wherein being has secured its essence. And the essence of being is to unconceal itself, to emerge, to come out into the unhidden- *physis*. Only what in its very essence *unconceals* must conceal itself, can love to conceal itself. Only what is unconcealing can be concealed. And therefore the *kruptesthai* of *physis* is not to be overcome, not to be stripped from *physis*. Rather, the task is the much more difficult one of allowing to *physis*, in all the purity of its essence, the *kruptesthai* that belongs to it.

(PM, 229-230/370-371)

Now that we have a better idea of how Heidegger himself understands the duplicity of *physis* there are two tasks which remain in this chapter. Firstly, we need to see how the understanding living nature as self-emergence which returns into itself forms a further duplicity and potential ambiguity in Heidegger's thinking of animality. Does the *physicality* of living beings fit with the ecological dimension of animality which was opened from the perspective of the environing spheres of living beings? Does the perspective gained from the interpretation of *physis* fit with the 'environmental' interpretation of animality developed in 1929/30? Secondly, we must ask how a focus upon language is to aid us in the re-naturalisation of nature.



## §19 The Duplicity of Animality and The Early Greek Experience of *Zōē*

This is the background against which the duplicity of animality can be properly understood. Not an unclarified ambiguity between two faces of *physis*, whereby living beings seem to belong to self-emergence but not to manifestation. Rather, the essential duplicity of *alētheia* is the opening in which both *logos* and *physis* receive their determinations. They both contain that duplicity in themselves. A turning in truth would work its way into both language and nature. Such a turning might be described as a 're-naturalisation' only in so far as *physis* itself can be re-naturalised in the self-hiding of self-emergence.

If we now turn to the last two lecture courses which Heidegger gave before the end of the war we can see that this duplicity finds its way into the thinking of animality and living nature. It is a duplicity indeed hinted at in Zimmerman's reading, although he generally locates living nature on what he sees as the 'self-emergence' side of *physis*. We can now show that if the centrality of truth is established and the turning in truth from unconcealment to dis-closure is anticipated then the problem of living nature does not disappear, but requires a different approach. Heidegger's apparent 'exclusion' of the animal from truth and language is well known, but how are we to understand this in the light of the thought that both *physis* and *logos* receive their determination from truth?

First of all, in the *Parmenides* lecture course of the winter semester of 1942-43 we find various statements which are frequently cited as signs of Heidegger's failure to maintain a critical attitude when it comes to living beings and of his failure to keep the question

of animality open.<sup>143</sup> The animal is excluded from the unconcealed in a way which makes one suspect that we may be once more witness to those operations which have functioned to exclude the animal from the *polis* and thus political consideration, but here transformed into an ontological given:

The animal, on the contrary, does not glimpse or see into, and certainly does not behold, the open in the sense of the unconcealedness of the unconcealed. Therefore neither can an animal relate to the closed as such, no more than it can comport itself to the concealed. The animal is excluded (*ausgeschlossen*- shut out) from the essential domain of the strife between between unconcealedness and concealedness. The sign of this essential exclusion is that no animal or plant “has the word.”

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143The context of Heidegger's remarks on animality at the end of this lecture course is a critique of Rilke in which he argues that Rilke's 'open' is in no way to be identified with *alētheia*, but is instead an 'open sea': 'The “open” is for him the constant progression by beings themselves, from beings to beings within beings.' *Parmenides* p.152/226. It would require more space than I have available here to elaborate and assess this critique and its grounding of Heidegger's criticism Rilke's notion the 'creature'. The critique will be taken up and substantially modified a few years later in the essay 'Why Poets?', OBT pp.200-241/248-295. For interpretations and criticisms of Heidegger's reading of Rilke see: Giorgio Agamben, *The Open: Man and Animal*, trans. by Kevin Attell (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004) pp. 57-62; Michel Haar, *The Song of the Earth: Heidegger and the Grounds of the History of Being*, trans. by Reginald Lilly (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993) pp.30-33, 120-138; Virginia Lyle Jennings, 'Heidegger's Critique of Rilke: On the Venture and the Leap' in *Heidegger Studies* Vol 21, 2005 pp.17-34; David Farrell Krell, *Daimon Life: Heidegger and Life-Philosophy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992) pp.22-23, 303-304; John Llewlyn, *The Middle Voice of Ecological Conscience, A Chiasmic Reading of Responsibility in the Neighbourhood of Levinas, Heidegger and Others* (Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1991)pp.146-173; Joan Stambaugh, *The Finitude of Being* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1992) pp.35-52, 93-104

(Parmenides, 159-160/237)

Initial suspicions are only deepened by the appeal to the apparently undeniable sign of exclusion, that no animal or plant “has the word.” Is this not a straightforward reiteration of the Aristotelian exclusion of living beings from the city on the basis of their not being possessed of *logos*? That seems even more evident if one recalls that earlier in this lecture course Heidegger has given a reading of the Greek understanding of *polis* as only derivatively a city and essentially 'the pole of the presence of beings determined by *alētheia*.' Is this not the reaffirmation of a tendency that philosophy has so frequently colluded with, man's hope to elude and elide his own animality by excluding living beings from the truth?

I think it can be shown that although there is an undeniable reiteration of the 'primal scene' whereby life is excluded from the city here, it is a repetition which ultimately opens up other trajectories for thinking animality, particularly with regard to the relation of animals to 'the word.' Heidegger goes on to qualify the exclusion of living beings from the unconcealed by sketching a view of animality which heavily relies on the concepts which he first worked out in *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*. The animal is related to a 'circle of food, prey, and sex in a way which is essentially different to the way the stone is related to the earth upon which it lies.' The basis of the relation which takes place in the animal circle is a certain 'excitability' in which the living being is, 'stirred to an emerging into a circle of stimulatability on the basis of which it draws other living beings into its circle of activity.' (Parmenides, 160/238) The dimension of 'animality' is not itself open to us to view and survey from the first. It is only opened for



us in an inherently problematic 'transposition' into the animal circle which itself opens on to the ecological dimension of interwoven living circles. However, another dimension is now added to this story:

Plant and animal are suspended (*hängen*) in something outside themselves without ever being able to "see" either the outside or the inside, i.e., to have it stand in an aspect unconcealed in the free of being. And never would it be possible for a stone, no more than for an airplane, to elevate itself towards the sun in jubilation, and to move like a lark, which nevertheless does not see the open. What the lark "sees," and how it sees, and what we here call "seeing" on the basis of our observation that the lark has eyes, these questions remain to be asked. In fact, an original poetising would be needed to surmise what is concealed in the living being, a poetic capacity to which more and higher things are charged, and more essential things (since they are genuinely essential), versus a mere humanisation of plants and animals.

(Parmenides, 160/238- translation modified)

The lark jubilates in the sun's light and warmth. What kind of jubilation is this 'for the lark', one might ask, if the sun is never disclosed to it? Heidegger's unyielding qualification that it nevertheless does not see the open itself seems to entail this is only a 'poetic' description of the lark's flight. Is this 'jubilation' then nothing for the lark? On the contrary, the lark jubilates in the sun, it elevates itself in an 'upsurgence' reminiscent of *physis* itself and an ordinary poeticising could bring this even more clearly to the fore. The inevitable conclusion to be drawn, one which Heidegger perhaps keeps in

reserve to avoid misunderstanding, is that the lark does participate in the disclosure of truth. It is in the truth and is true to itself in the upsurge of *physis* which can be brought out in an originary poeticising. True enough, the dimension of unconcealment is not open for it to see. Yet that does not mean that the flight of the lark only opens the truth 'for us', as if it were brought into the service of man in opening the truth in the same way that it was brought into the service of his home and city as a source of food or to provide a pleasant song. Such 'humanisation' can of course take many forms, some of them more obvious than others. But this jubilation of the lark is the very opposite of anthropomorphism, it is the lark coming into its own. In doing so it can put us on the way towards the truth of disclosure.

The real duplicity of Heidegger's thinking of animality now comes into view. It is not a question of competing or opposing theses, but more of a change of perspective or standpoint. The first we might name, following Herder, the fundamental perspective of 'animal spheres.' It is this perspective which is developed in *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*. We have shown that some characterisations of these 'spheres', especially that of 'dis-inhibiting ring' which is clearly still present in the *Parmenides* lectures, commits Heidegger to a framework of understanding behaviour in terms of drives, which is in itself highly questionable and which should be brought into question on the basis of Heidegger's own retrieval of *dynamis*. Nevertheless, opening up the perspective of 'animal spheres' remains fundamental, not as something which can be taken for granted, but as a standpoint from which what I have called the *ecological dimension* can be entered. It is not a question of moving beyond the perspective of 'animal spheres' but of moving through it. The second perspective, might be called the perspective of the *physis* of living beings, if *physis* is understood in its relation to

*alētheia* and to a *logos* of originary poeticising. This perspective was already present in the background of *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, but it was not developed or brought to the fore. Here in the *Parmenides* course the two perspectives are brought side by side.

There is a tension to be felt in this duplicity of standpoints. But it is far from a contradiction which could be overcome or even an ambiguity which could be clarified. One might say the animal is in the truth 'for us,' whilst it does not see the truth itself, were it not that both perspectives are attempts to lead us to a space between and before the petrification of those positions. Neither 'perspective' is a projection from a fixed position. Neither is the duplicity of perspective a 'zone of undecidability' in which the living being would vacillate between exclusion and inclusion in the truth. Rather, living beings are outside the truth from the perspective of animal spheres, but they are in the truth from the perspective of their *physicality*. It remains questionable whether either standpoint is fully *ours* or *theirs*. They are both perspectives that can become appropriate for Dasein to take up in the truth.

These two perspectives are brought into even closer proximity in the two lecture courses on Heraclitus which Heidegger delivered in the following two semesters. The first of these lecture courses, 'The Inception of Western Thought: Heraclitus', is an interpretation of Heraclitus which takes its departure from a few key fragments, each of which Heidegger understands as concerned with the nature *physis*. The second course, 'Logic: Heraclitus' teaching from Logos' is concerned with Heraclitus' understanding of *logos* and the mutations which have occurred in the 'logic' of western thought since its inception. However, it soon becomes clear that these two courses are not ultimately



concerned with different aspects or topics in Heraclitus' thought. Rather, the thinking of *physis* and *logos* both belong to the reorientation of *alētheia* and the attempt to draw out the closure essential to disclosure, the eliding of which begins even in the first inception of thought. Thus, Heidegger claims that: '*Alētheia*, the disclosure (*Entbergung*) in uncovering (*Unverborgenheit*), is the essence of *physis*...' (GA 55, 173). On the one hand, language participates in nature, so that it is part of the 'upsurging' of *physis*, 'how man gathered in the look arises from out of himself, how in speech he discloses to human beings the upsurging world and himself along with it, how mind (*Gemüt*) unfolds itself in gestures...' (GA 55, 87) On the other hand, *logos* is originally an aspect of *physis* and *alētheia* as a whole, the 'inner logic' of things themselves: 'When we try to think reading and the read, gathering and the gathered in the sense explained, then we will perhaps for once reach that point where we can intimate the originary essence of *logos*, i.e., to think its essence at one with what the the early Greek thinkers named together when they used the name *logos: physis- alētheia*.' (GA 55, 269)

In the first set of lectures, concerned primarily with *physis*, an interpretation of *zōē* as one of the fundamental words of inceptive thinking unfolds, as a word which helps us to illuminate the essence of *physis*. So in the inception of thought life was not a part of being, not a region of being, nor something comprised of a particular set of beings. Life was the very character of being, something which is echoed and 'modernised' in Leibniz and several of Nietzsche's aphorisms. Importantly for our purposes, Heidegger then briefly turns once more towards some of the consequences of this thought for our understanding of animality:

The animality of the animal (*Das Tierhafte*), as the Greeks thought it, is

determined from out of *zōon*, that upsurging (*Aufgehenden*), which properly reposes in itself, in that it does not speak itself forth (*sich nicht ausspricht*). We require, for example, in the case of an approximate and indeterminate representation of the bird only a few steps in order to see the bird as the Greeks did. To experience the animal and to recognise that, in its hovering and soaring the free measure of the open comes to presence, as do the lore (*die Kunde*) and the call and the magic in its singing, so that the essence of the bird (*Vogelwesen*) bears away in the open and brings it forth. To that there also necessarily belongs the closing and preserving of the enclosed, e.g., in mourning. The bird, flying, singing, binds and points out in the open. It is enmeshed (*verstrickt*) in the open. *Seira* means rope in Greek. The sirens are 'in Greek' the ensnarers in more than one sense of the word.

(GA 55, 95-96)

Whether the bird named here is the lark of the Parmenides lectures remains unsaid. The hovering and soaring could put one in mind of a kestrel, whilst the singing which brings to presence the lore and the magic and call could bring forth any number of songbirds. The closing and preserving in mourning and sadness inevitably suggests that favourite of romantic poetry, a nightingale. The sirens, who began as two virgins in a field of flowers and bones in Homer's epic, in the course of legend gradually grew more birdlike features, feet, feathers and wings. *Siren* also came to mean simply a small song bird. Perhaps a flycatcher, which weaves a net around itself with both song and its own doubled-back sallies. The pied flycatcher, a summer visitor to northern Europe, is even called the 'mourning flycatcher' in German. Each would be borne away in the disclosure



of *physis* in its own way and in doing so would preserve and recover its closure.<sup>144</sup>

What we can say is that Heidegger brings together the two perspectives on animality which still seemed somewhat separate and even discordant in the Parmenides lectures. The bird brings forth the open in being by bearing itself away. It is enmeshed,

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144 David Farrell Krell has analysed these passages from the Parmenides and Heraclitus courses in conjunction with the two essays on Heraclitus which were written in the fifties and raised some decisive questions. Yet it seems to me that some of the alternatives that he sketches would raise problems similar to those that he finds in Heidegger's approach. When Heidegger claims that the root of *zōē* is *za-*, a prefix of intensification and goes on to say that we cannot understand *zōē* unless we can properly experience that which it is an intensification of, namely *physis*, Krell claims: 'The issue is whether or not the "life-essence" of animality must rise, insofar as it is living, as the clearing, the clearing as such. What if the unified field of essence in the *za-*, the unified field of essence as such, the field of *physis*, were *daimon life* rather than what Heidegger prefers to call *Ek-sistenz* or *Da-sein*?' David Farrell Krell, *Daimon Life: Heidegger and Life-Philosophy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992) pp.17-18 These alternatives appear to me to equally unsatisfactory. For Heidegger since *Contributions to Philosophy (from Ereignis)*, *Da-sein* no longer coincides exactly with the being of that being for which its own being is an issue, so that a question of 'man' arises once more. The identification of animality with the clearing as such would raise many of the problems of that original identification. Why should it be that a clearing identified with *daimon life* is the only site where mountains and rivers, human beings and gods could come to presence? On the other hand, it could be argued, as I am arguing here, that there is a *need* for animality in the opening of the clearing, just as Heidegger insisted upon the *need* for mortals in the countering of the fourfold. The contribution of the mortals would be the possibility of saying 'the clearing as such.' What Krell seems to be striving towards is a sense of the distinction between nature as it appears *for us* and nature as it unfolds *in itself*, which is also important for Zimmerman. But whilst Zimmerman understands these as two aspects of *physis* the relation between which needs further clarification, Krell seems to want to move towards the ontological priority of the second with the idea of a "second" history of being, a history of the field of *daimon life*, which would turn out to be the primary history of being. It is exactly such a



interwoven, knitted in to the open and as such it can itself entangle other living things, including men, in this open net. One need not chose between the understanding of animals as 'captivated' by their environment, enmeshed in and ensnaring others in its cycle of capacities and the standpoint which sees animals as participants in the upsurging of *physis*. Heidegger thinks that the two belong to one another.

Animality is certainly still understood as an upsurgence which essentially does not 'speak itself forth'. That is because, whilst its stands in the clearing it does not look into the clearing. But it is now impossible to understand the 'standing' in the clearing of 'a rock, a tree, a mountain, an animal,' as a life that depends upon the gaze of a human being. They are not 'standing around' in the clearing waiting to be gazed upon. Rather, all of them invite our look in such a way that we are enabled to see into the clearing itself and in doing so we become those who are unable to hide themselves before the upsurgence of nature. (GA 55, 173)

When Heidegger highlights the speechlessness of the animal we must not take him to be denying the ability of animals to communicate or express themselves in a multitude of ways. Nor is he denying that animality has its own 'inner logic' as does the whole of *physis*. What he is claiming is that living capacities do not 'gather in' that logic nor do they express nature as such nor look into the clearing of truth. Living nature can invite and enable such capabilities for human beings and since they are enabled in such a way

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grounding priority which Heidegger wishes to avoid. Furthermore, we would have to ask in what way the field of *physis* is 'unified.' It may be that living beings can be encountered as articulations and intensifications of *physis*, but like Heraclitus' bow and lyre, *physis* is not at one with itself. And what is it which gathers the dissemination of life and nature and acts as the string to the bow? Is it not precisely *logos*?

those capabilities are not solely our own property. They cannot be hoarded away from the living nature which enables them without allowing them to wither. Correspondingly, if we are able to hearken to the essence of language, the language which nature speaks in silence and find that echoed in our own capability for *logos*, then we may be able to *recover* living nature within and throughout that mode of life that enables us to *discover* so much about it.

## §20 The Language of Nature Seeks Silence

If, as I have argued, *physis* and *logos* are joined as two faces of *alētheia*, then we can begin to formulate a little more precisely how it is that we might initiate the recovery of nature within language. If Heidegger's philosophical project in the Thirties revolved around his attempts to recover what the first inception of thought by the early Greek thinkers already began to lose sight of in *alētheia*, not through any fault of their own but because of their very attention to the matter, then it is this reorientation of *alētheia* which must be sought in language, *that* face of the truth which has been so orientated towards *discovery*. In a parenthetical note in the Heraclitus lectures Heidegger names that which is unthought in *alētheia* the *clearing*, in the sense of a 'brightening opening preservation' (*erhellend öffnenden Bergen*) (GA 55, 17) What is essential to the clearing is not so much the light that illuminates, for that light penetrates metaphysics right through to the enlightenment. What is essential is that the clearing is at once preserved by the surrounding darkness. The light is let through the trees and they fall away, for example when the sun picks out a deer in the clearing, but there is no clearing without the trees. There is no clearing where the forest is clear-cut. Clearings are frequently created by animals. We might even consider risking the translation of *Lichtung* as

*glade*. That translation brings with it the importance of the trees and their presencing in the glade can still be felt in the rhyme with 'shade'. Furthermore, there is a gladdening and lightening in etymology of glade that is inseparable from the darkening of the wood and reminds us of the importance of fundamental attunement in preserving this site of presencing.

The language which is appropriate to nature, which helps to preserve what it discovers, is therefore not a language that brings the conditions of presencing to light. It is not transcendental in that sense. It is a language that preserves both its own power to bring to light and the upsurge of that which it speaks of. If we are to begin to voice a language more appropriate to nature then we must first hearken to language and to the apparent speechlessness of nature, for there we may hear the silent origin of both.

Language, which seemed to act as a veil between human beings and nature and to be the very element in which the humanisation of the world is fulfilled can prepare for the recovery of nature. Yet this recovery can only be initiated if we can hearken to the silent origin, which is neither origination (*Entstehung*) nor essence (*Wesen*), but the essencing (*Wesung*) that is co-originary of language and nature. One of the reasons that Heidegger turns towards poetry in his thinking of language, is that poetry is not a raw *expression*, but language that can also point back towards that which it does not express, the *reticence* of language, its *silencing*. The refusal of language to divulge all of its secrets or to express itself completely. What remains silent is the appropriating event which delivers over that which is expressed.<sup>145</sup> It is from this silent appropriation, if we can be still enough to hearken to it, that our relation to living nature can be forged appropriately.

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145 OEL, p.61/72



At the same time we must learn to hear this silence in the naturing of nature. Can we find in the thinking of nature and ecology any hints towards this possibility? It would appear that the silence of nature remains an ambiguous experience for us. The 'peace and quiet' which many seek outside of towns and cities is not just an attempt to escape certain kinds of sounds, the background drone of traffic and industry. Apart from the fact that it becomes increasingly difficult to really escape from such 'noise,' it is not the sheer absence of sound which is sought, but the particular quality of the silence of nature. Otherwise a sound proof chamber would do just as well. Theodor Adorno appreciates something of this quality of silence when he writes:

If you exclaim 'What a sight!' in some natural setting, you detract from its beauty by violating the silence of its language. Appearing nature seeks silence, whereas that person who is able to appreciate appearing nature is constantly driven to verbalise something so as to free himself momentarily of his monad-like imprisonment.<sup>146</sup>

Notice that Adorno writes of 'appearing nature,' a phrase which sets his thought, for a moment at least, very much on a par with Heidegger's thinking of *physis*, the presencing of nature. Appearing nature seeks 'silence,' in which it can come to presence, whilst those who can appreciate this are nevertheless driven to dispel that silence. The sounds of living nature, on the other hand, do not dispel silence but if we listen aright, deepen it. Our words dispel it because we feel that we are not at home here in the midst of silence. We mistakenly think that the only way to escape an isolated existence is to make ourselves heard. If, however, it could be shown that it is not in verbalising

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<sup>146</sup> T.W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. C. Lenhardt (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984), p. 102

something, anything, that we can free ourselves from a 'monad-like imprisonment,' but on the contrary that freedom lies in a hearkening to the silence which nature seeks for itself, then the silence which appearing nature seeks and the silencing of the word might participate in the same essencing. Our words would no longer dispel that silence but preserve it.

On the other hand, there has been an altogether more terrifying experience of the silencing of nature. In her 1962 book *Silent Spring*, a book which has had a huge influence on the modern environmental movement, Rachel Carson describes the effects of the use of pesticides in North America at that time. The silence which she writes of has a very different quality:

There was a strange stillness. The birds, for example- where had they gone? Many people spoke of them puzzled and disturbed. The feeding stations in the backyards were deserted. The few birds seen anywhere were moribund; they trembled violently and could not fly. It was a spring without voices. On mornings that had once throbbed with the dawn chorus of robins, catbirds, doves, jays, wrens, and scores of other bird voices there was now no sound; only silence lay over the fields and woods and marsh.<sup>147</sup>

This silence is not the silence which nature's own language seeks for itself. That silence was only intensified by the bird song which suddenly breaks out, giving the silence its own contours, rather than dispelling or annihilating it. The silence which Carson describes can only be dispelled and broken with relief by a voice seeking to distract attention from its awful weight. Yet its uncanny quality does call for our attention just

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<sup>147</sup> Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring* (London: Penguin, 1991) p.22

as much as the silence which nature seeks. How can we give voice to the spring once more? Not simply by discovering alternative ways to control insects and disease. Not simply by developing an organic agriculture, or as Carson called it a '*biological*' agriculture in the broadest sense. We must also learn to hearken to the silence which nature seeks for itself, a silence which is dispelled neither by bird song nor by a word which preserves its own silent source. Our rush to cover over the memory of that silent spring should not prevent us from listening out for what we have long forgotten to pay heed to, the echo of which can still be heard in the terrible silence resounding over the fields and woods and marsh. If we can bear to pay heed to that, then perhaps we will also be able to hearken to another silent spring, the source of the word and living nature. In the uncanny silence which grows more awful and still and which we have not managed to obliterate with ever more noisy exploits, we might still hear the echo of the silence which the language of nature seeks for itself.

If there is to be *thinking* provoked by and brought to bear upon ecological politics then we must learn to hearken to both of these experiences of silence in nature. Yet it will remain a thinking of politics, not necessarily because it takes place in the *polis* or through the expansion of the laws of the *polis*, but because it brings the experience of the silent spring into political life. First of all it is essential not to conflate the silence which nature seeks for itself with the silence which it has been reduced to. Beyond that, however, ecological politics must not conflate *logos* and *physis*, although it seeks the appropriation of the two and sees the possibility of a *recovery* of nature in the reorientation of each in a truth which preserves as it uncovers. It takes time to find words appropriate to nature. That is not to say we can afford to disengage our language from the concerns which press upon us. But the demand for reconciliation can lead to



the blending and dissolution of language and nature rather than the articulation of their point of juncture.

Finally, ecological politics cannot come about without a return to the moment at which politics was initiated and nature was apparently excluded from the *polis*. Perhaps we can think that space opened up by Aristotle not as the zone of indifference as Agamben would have it, the inclusive exclusion which transforms life into *bare life* and grounds sovereignty and the domination of nature, but as precisely the space in which ecological difference is to be preserved. The difference between speech and voice would then not be the first result of machination on its way to the humanisation of the world, but would allow language to become the site of resistance to that humanisation. We would then be called upon to raise a very different set of questions about the relation of language and nature. No longer concerned with whether nature can be made to speak our language, whether it be sign language or some other form of communication. Nor would it be a case of filling out the bare voices of nature with our own logic or expressive intentions. Rather we would need to ask whether the poetic word in which a world is wrought can retain that power without the jubilation of the lark? The lark may not be world-building, but could a world be built without its song?

## Conclusion

## § 21 The Experience of Poverty as Earthly Freedom

The earthly has long been thought as lacking. The earth and what belongs to the earth long to overcome themselves. Whether it is by joining with the Word from outside or by immanently developing according to a concept to which earthly nature as such is not equal, nature only comes into its own and lives in freedom when it is in the process of moving beyond itself. What is *living* in nature, the life of nature, is the striving of the earthly to overcome the earth. On the other hand, when nothing of this lack is experienced and the naturing of nature is thought as the overflowing expression of what is from the start an absolute *plenum*, as it was for Spinoza, then *physis* is already at one with the Word and Law of God and freedom in nature can mean nothing but the unimpeded productive power of substance. The earth has always been too poor or too rich for a freedom of its own.

The complex interplay of poverty and riches in the *striving* of life can be found in the two thinkers who for Heidegger mark the beginning and the end of metaphysics or the 'first beginning' of thought: Plato and Nietzsche. Diotima, according to Socrates in Plato's *Symposium*, claims that *eros* is the child of *poros* and *penia*, resourcefulness and poverty. He thus has a double nature which in itself is neither rich nor poor, but which does partake in both by turns: 'Because he has his mother's nature, he dwells ever with want. But on the other hand, by favour of his father, he ever plots for good and beautiful things, because he is courageous, eager and intense, and clever hunter ever weaving some new device, desiring understanding and capable of it, a lover of wisdom through the whole of life, clever at enchantment, a sorcerer and a sophist.'<sup>148</sup> One is reminded of

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<sup>148</sup> Plato, *The Symposium* 203 c-e. See, *The Dialogues of Plato, Vol. II, The Symposium*, translated with comment by R.E.Allen (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991) pp.146-147

the second 'point of inner integrity' in the Antigone ode interpretations that we explored in section 12: *pantoporos*, *aporos*, in his encounter with *physis* man is both full or resource and without resource. It will be recalled that Heidegger insists that these are not separate points in our physical life, but integrally related aspects of existence in the midst of living nature. When this double aspect of earthly life is thought by philosophy it finds its way into Plato's understanding of the love of knowledge which resourcefulness cultivates in *eros* and sets the scene for the way Aristotle derives representative thought from the striving of the soul. Thought, far from being a free floating activity that transports us away from our physicality, was already set in the context of striving and struggling life at the inception of the first beginning.

At the other end of that history we find Nietzsche insisting that truth and thought be set back into the context of life, which they have struggled in vain to free themselves from. The poverty and abundant resourcefulness which formed the complex interplay and inner integrity of *eros* for Plato are now set apart as two fundamentally different ways of life and thought. In the fifth book of *The Gay Science* Nietzsche sets out the two ways in which the struggling and striving of life can be experienced:

What is romanticism?- Every art, every philosophy may be viewed as a remedy and an aid in the service of growing and struggling life; they always presuppose suffering and sufferers. But there are two kinds of sufferers: first, those who suffer from the *over-fulness of life*- they want a Dionysian art and likewise a tragic view of life, a tragic insight- and then those who suffer from the impoverishment of life and seek rest, stillness, calm seas, redemption from themselves through art and knowledge, or intoxication,



convulsions, anaesthesia, and madness.<sup>149</sup>

Art and philosophy can both act as a remedy for life in which there is no getting away from suffering and sufferers, which are simply the consequence of the growth and struggle to overcome itself that life presupposes. But the living can suffer from an overflow and abundance able to incorporate lack and loss, as occurs in tragic art; or they can suffer in a way which leads to a shrinking away from growth and struggle. Romanticism, on the other hand, takes on many forms, seeking to escape from life into anaesthesia or apocalypse. It is not by chance that these two escape routes have also been identified as strong tendencies in the 'romanticism' of ecological thought.

Whether contemporary ecological thought is thoroughly 'romantic' in this sense is debatable. The influence of Spinoza and of course Darwin could support either a 'Dionysian' or 'romantic' view. Nietzsche himself connects these two thinkers on the side of romanticism when he interprets Spinoza's *conatus* as an 'instinct for self-preservation' and suggests that, 'our modern natural sciences have become thoroughly entangled in this Spinozistic dogma (most recently and worst of all Darwinism with its incomprehensibly onesided doctrine of the 'struggle for existence')...' <sup>150</sup> Life is not a struggle to exist and continue but to *expand*. Nietzsche puts the point in the strongest possible terms, attributing this style of thought to the socio-economic conditions of Victorian England. That charge resonates with Heidegger's accusation that Darwinism was born from an economic view of man. Nietzsche, of course, understood *expansion* and *growth* as the rule of life and the doctrine of 'will to power' sees no essential

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<sup>149</sup>Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1974)

p.328

<sup>150</sup> Ibid p.292

difference between biological, cultural, economic, political and psychological life. On the other hand, a less 'onesided' reading of Spinoza and Darwin might well find dionysiac traits in the infinite productive power of *Deus sive Natura* or the exuberance of life which always produces more offspring than can possibly survive on an earth generally close to ecological *plenum*.

The question that I have posed in this thesis is whether we find in Heidegger's work a way to think the 'poverty' and 'richness' of living nature otherwise and in so doing transform our understanding of ecological *thought* itself? If thought is to be *ecological* does that require that it be set into the context of striving life? Or has the metaphysical image of thought always been ecological in that sense? Would not ecological *thought* then require that we begin to think earthly life in the context of a truth that gives it its own freedom, rather than truth and thought as the end result of a life whose only freedom comes in the form of its continuing living struggle? Whether that struggle is driven by the poverty of lack or the exuberance of overflow, neither thought nor the earth will come into a freedom of their own in this way.

If we are to find a way towards that freedom then it is not a case of simply leaving behind all that has been thought in metaphysics concerning living nature and the earth. We cannot be content, for example, to eschew apparently outmoded forms of ethical thought in order to incorporate living beings and the earth into an ethics of responsibility. Such a project can only be successful if we are able to identify as precisely as possible those points in the thinking of the 'first beginning' which have led towards the exclusion of living beings from consideration in ethical life, but equally their enthusiastic inclusion in ethical life broadly conceived in a way that has led to such



captivation, exploitation and annihilation. As I have tried to show throughout this thesis, the great advantage of Heidegger's approach to this history is that it helps us to pin point these decisive moments whilst at the same time highlighting counterpoints which help to prepare a way of thinking that is truly another beginning rather than a 're-vitalisation' of what has gone before. 'Poverty', *sterēsis*, privation all name counterpoints of this kind, which cannot be simply taken up as we find them, but can help us to cultivate another side to our current understanding of living nature. Beyond that, poverty might lead us towards an ecological thought that thinks the relation of poverty to riches otherwise than as the economy of striving in living nature.

In a manuscript written in 1938-9 entitled *The History of Beyng*, at the beginning of the war which he would end by composing the essay on 'Poverty' with which I began, Heidegger continues to reflect on the nature of power and life. In this text we still find the remains of a thinking of the earth in terms of 'strife,' but also signs of a move away from that struggle towards an interplay more characteristic of his later thought. Nevertheless, there is still room here for reflection on the specificity of *living* nature, which becomes more implausible as the vision of world and thing emerges post-1949. Ecological thought would do well to return to this moment, a moment at which Heidegger articulates the difference between being and beings in terms of poverty and property.

In the first place, Heidegger sketches that phase in the history of being when the beingness of beings becomes 'presentationality'. He links presentationality, on the one hand, with the thinking of nature and living nature in particular in terms of various forms and modes of striving. On the other hand, presentationality is also an



understanding of the beingness of beings with direct links the technological thinking of being that Heidegger will later name *Gestell*:

24. *The presentationality (Vorgestelltheit) of beings as of the actual.*

This pre-sentationality in the sense of “certain”, securing presentations (representations), i.e. the provision of the actual as what is set forth as functional.

Hence *energeia* is now for Leibniz held fast at once as *ousia* and *vis*, “force”, neither “possibility” nor “actuality”.

Neither is it the “between”, but rather “origin” and what is proper to beings *nisus, conatus*.

Possibility and actuality are then correspondingly transformed.

*Nisus* and the *empowerment of power*. “Urge”

What becomes of “nature”?

What sense does natural science now get?

*Mechanics* directly liberates forces.

Hence: living being as “organism”.

From organism to the “organic”.

The organic and the *drive* as elemental.

Drive and urge as the “actual”.

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Presentationality not in the sense of *idea* (this *not aesthetic-optical*)- *physis*.

Presentationality just as little in the sense of an empty, *simply naïve* [?] *objectification*.

The pre-sentation as bringing-before-itself of the actual as the functional and along with that the letting loose of “beings” in such a way.

The self-pre-sentation in the ambiguity of the *representatio*.

*Pre-sentation* and “Technics”.

(GA 69, 25-26)

Presentation (*Vorstellung*) will eventually be gathered together along with various other words stemming from the verb *stellen* in the *Ge-stell*. It is important to notice that it is

not only the *objectification* of nature that takes place in the modern scientific worldview. Presentationality is already on its way to the thinking of being as self-empowerment that dissolves all subjectivity and objectivity into power. Ecological thought that sets out to de-objectify nature by emphasising its *dynamic* or *organic* character may thus simply feed into the movement of thought that has already been fulfilled in technology. If the earth is to be released into a freedom of its own then such critiques of objectification can only be one step towards a more thoroughgoing recovery of living nature.

Whether Heidegger's own thinking of the earth would allow it that freedom becomes questionable when we read passages such as the following:

#### 16. *World-Relation (Welt-bezug)*

World-relation. Let in to the "Earth". *Both*, because *belongingness to beyng* and with this *dis-countering*. (*Entgegnung*)

Earth and life (the loving) (*Liebendes*) of darkening towering-overshooting itself earthly urge (*Drang*). As *strife* towards world.

(GA 69, 20)

This characterisation of the earth, still recognisably that which was presented in *The Origin of the Work of Art*, seems to bring with it precisely those urges that led it to be ensnared in the technological net. The earthly urge leads it into strife with the world,



which it nevertheless towers through and overshoots. Earthly life is even linked to love, in a way that roots it in the soil of Plato's *eros*.

Is not the thinking of living nature that comes out of Heidegger's middle period still compromised by a *metaphysical drive*? Had not ecological thought better move beyond this characterisation of the earth if it is to continue to prepare for earthly freedom? In fact, we already find a thinking of the earth in *The History of Beyng* that is more closely reminiscent of some of Heidegger's later essays; a thinking of the earth which is intimately linked to the notion of *poverty*. Poverty now understood as the expropriation (*Enteignis*) that clears a space for living beings to come into their own (*Ereignis*).

### 99. *Poverty*

The ex-propritation of beings and their predominance. Such expropriation is not robbery or taking away, but the essential consequence of an appropriation of beyng in its truth. The inabidingness of this appropriation is the giving (a-way) of the essence of beyng in delivery, displaced (*enthobene*) from every need and lack.

Poverty is the from-out-of-itself-abyssal-decisive inexhaustibility of giving.

Impoverishment from *poverty*, the grounding of Da-sein which springs from such impoverishment is history.

*Poverty: the essence of beyng as appropriation.*

*Property- as the essence of 'beings'*

Impoverishment- closed into the appropriation "of" Da-sein as the inabidingness and guardianship of the truth is belonging to history as the history of beyng.

(GA 69, 110)

Once more it is not a question of overcoming poverty understood as lack or of negating its negativity in sublimation (*Aufhebung*), but to displace and release (*entheben*) poverty from the economy of lack and fulfillment. If the truth of beyng is now poverty that clears a space for beings to come into their own, rather than any kind of *beingness* that belongs to beings, guaranteeing them in their being, how do things stand with beings? Beings become the *property* that comes into its own in the truth of beyng:

112. *Property*

[...]

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The *Er-eignung* of the *Da* through the voice of silence allows as clearing all at once the earth to find itself in the world, the world in humankind, humankind in god and god in the earth. This allowing-to-find-oneself as the essencing of beyng grounds property and lets what is ownmost (*Eigentümliches*) emerge here. Not that the tree over there for comparative representation has what is 'peculiar' to it and through its here and now its 'uniqueness' (*Einziges*), that is not what gives it its ownedness, but rather:

the earth encloses itself in it and is taken up into it by way of its roots, whilst it at once stands free in the encircling clearing references of worldly prevailing. It is properly, because it is grounded in its belonging to the in-between, so that each is in a different way an essence in appropriation (*Wesen im Er-eignis*).

(GA 69, 126)

The event whereby beings come into their own takes place in the poverty that clears a space in which they can find themselves. The tree described here comes into its own between the world, humankind, god and earth. This is not quite that 'fourfold' in whose 'mirror-play' the *thing* will take its place, but it is certainly a move in that direction and away from the strife of world and earth in the work of art.

Is it a coincidence that Heidegger chooses a tree to illustrate this conception of *property*? The central illustrations in *The Origin of the Work of Art* were a painting and a temple. They formed a point of articulation in which living nature found itself between earth and world, but there was no indication that living beings themselves could articulate world and earth in this way. Later, in the essay entitled 'The Thing', which was originally one of the Bremen lectures of 1949, we find a complex interplay between the earth thought as 'the building bearer, nourishing the fruitful, tending the gatherings of water and stone, plant and animal,'<sup>151</sup> suggesting a kind of pre-individual gathering of living and non-living nature, where '*Gewässer und Gestein, Gewächs und Getier*,' echo the 'Ge-' prefix of the '*Geviert*' itself, and the singular *thing* illustrated with

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<sup>151</sup>*Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. by Alfred Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, 1971) p.178,

*Vorträge und Aufsätze*, 9th edn. (Stuttgart: Neske, 2000) p.170- translation modified



the description of a jug, but which we are told at the end might also be found in what we usually think of as living things: 'But tree and pond too, brook and hill, are things, each in its own way. Things, each thinging, from time to time in its own way, are heron and roe deer, horse and bull.'<sup>152</sup> Although four animals are here grouped together, the tree is grouped with pond, brook and hill, things that we usually think of as non-living in themselves. Indeed, the logic that allows the thinking of a thing in this way to point us towards the singularity that we miss when comparative representation tries to specify the class in which each being belongs also seems to make this kind of reflection unable to see anything *peculiar* about living nature. When the world is played out in the absolute singularity of things there is no longer a question to be asked concerning living nature. This danger already arises in the description of *property*, but here the focus on what is ownmost to the tree demands the question as to whether we can allow the tree to come into its own between earth and world, whilst continuing to appreciate the particularity and peculiarity that it lends to earth and world as a living being.

Between the strife of world and earth in the *work of art* and the mirror-play of the fourfold played out in the *thing*, we find this tree coming into its own as *property* in a space allowed to it by poverty. If we are to develop an ecological thought that can adequately address the question that living nature poses, neither classifying the living as one set of beings amongst others in comparative representation nor as a particular instance of the being of beings thought as life, urge, drive and finally the self-empowerment of power, then it is to this crossroads in Heidegger's path of thought that we need to return. There the economy of self-empowerment is confronted with a conception of poverty and property that could allow us to do full justice to an ecological thinking of living nature. There the earth might finally be released into a freedom of its

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<sup>152</sup> Ibid, p.182/p.175- translation modified

own.

## Appendix 1

Working Translation of 'Die Armut', first published in *Heidegger Studies* 1994, Vol.10,  
5-11

## Poverty

Martin Heidegger

Towards an essay outline on the historical periods of the West, Hölderlin writes the guiding word:

“For us everything is concentrated on the spiritual, we have become poor so as to become rich.”

This word was written around the time of the transition from the 18<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. The opinion that Hölderlin says this about his own present is so obvious that one shies away from expressly noting it. Hölderlin also says, 'For us everything is concentrated on the spiritual.' Does 'for us' in the saying mean only the Germans and does 'us' mean us, the contemporaries of that time in European history which was Hölderlin's lifetime? This cannot be decided immediately and easily. We only know this, that when Hölderlin speaks of history, by which he always means the West, he thinks in long time periods. If he says 'now' and names us 'us,' then he does not mean the historical datable time of that point at which he writes down the sentence; then again with 'us' he also means himself, but 'himself' not as the ascertainable historical person, but 'himself' as the poet who, poeticising, soars over his 'own time' and addresses the 'years of the peoples' (To the Germans IV, 133) and thus addressing them meditates



upon that which secretly occurs in Western history, but which is never to be read in historically ascertainable events. That is why Hölderlin's word may not be said from the time and for the time at which it was written and therefore the time in which it was written is also another time from that of the historical date and the distinguishable periods of the chronologically familiar centuries.

Hölderlin says: "For us everything is concentrated on the spiritual, we have become poor so as to become rich." We can only understand the content and the relevance of this saying when we know what Hölderlin thinks when he says 'the spiritual.'

The 'spiritual,' to be sure, is that which is determined out of spirit and through spirit. But what is 'spirit'?

From a long tradition of thinking we have various ready-made answers to this question. We say: spirit is the opposite of matter. The spiritual is the immaterial, as opposed to the material. But, this determination of spirit and the spiritual remains caught in the mere negation of matter and the material. The Greek word *pneuma*, the Latin word *spiritus* and the French word *l'esprit* already say more. The immaterial is the 'pneumatic' and the 'spiritual' [Spirituelle]. That means: spirit is the effective power of inspiration and wisdom, in Greek *sophia*. This substantial essence of spirit was thought through in the theological-philosophical speculation of the Christian Church on the Trinity; Augustine's work *de trinitate* becomes standard for the Roman Church; in the Eastern Church a different development occurred, especially in the Russian unfolding of the teaching of holy Sophia. It is still alive today in Russian mysticism in a way that we can hardly imagine. The work of spirit as the all working-through power of inspiration and

wisdom (Sophia) is the 'magical.' The essence of the magical is as dark as the essence of the pneumatic. Yet we know that the theosopher and philosopher Jacob Böhme- the cobbler of Görlitz, the stillest of all cobblers, as he has been named- recognised the magical in the cobbler's orb and thought it as primordial will. Böhme's teaching of the divine Sophia (Theosophia) was already becoming famous in 17<sup>th</sup> Century Russia, at that time the Russians spoke of the holy church father Jacob Böhme. A renewal of Böhme's influence was carried out in Russia at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, at the same time as the powerful effect of Hegel and Schelling (Wladimir Schowjoff). Hence it is far from an exaggeration if I say that that which we today take short-sightedly and half-thought to be only 'political' or even grossly political and name Russian communism, comes from a spiritual world about which we hardly know anything. Not even to mention the fact that we have already forgotten to think this, how even *gross* materialism, the foreground of communism, is itself nothing material but something spiritual and a spiritual world, that can only be experienced and brought to the delivery of its truth and untruth in spirit and out of spirit.

Yet spirit is not only the effective will as substance, it is at the same time and especially since Descartes throughout modernity thought as self-consciousness, i.e. as subject, intellect, reason and understanding, given precedence over, or given equality with, or set against the soul as the principle of life, in the sense of bare vitality and embodiment (cf. Klages' interpretation of Nietzsche: spirit is the antagonist of the soul; spirit as "understanding", by which the pneumatic and the spiritual are forgotten, that which Nietzsche knew so well). The essence of spirit is primordial will, which wills itself, such will is at times thought as substance, at times as subject, at times as the unity of both. These more or less familiar but everywhere prevailing representations of the



essence of spirit- those of metaphysics- must now be briefly recalled, so that we can then pay attention to what it means for Hölderlin to think the essence of spirit completely differently.

What is a spirit for Hölderlin? On what is the spiritual based for him? What does it mean that for us everything is concentrated on the spiritual?

Around the same time as the aforementioned saying came Hölderlin's philosophical sketch, from which the following lines are taken (<On Religion> III3, 263).

“Neither from himself alone, nor only from the objects which surround him, can man experience that more than a mechanical operation, a spirit, a god, is in the world, but [he can experience it] in a more lively relationship raised sublimely above [*erhabenen*] bare need [*Notdurft*], in which <he> stands with that which surrounds him.”

What is the sublime relationship in which man stands with that which surrounds him? In the experience of this relationship we experience spirit and the spiritual. Hölderlin gives no details concerning this relationship,- so in coming up to meet him we must attempt to think it more clearly. The relationship is not with objects, says Hölderlin, it is not the relation of subjects to objects, which relation is mostly determined from the prevailing bare need, insofar as objects are what we work on and use to satisfy goals and aims and therefore needs, which bare need awakens in us.

Man stands in a relationship with that which surrounds him and that relationship is



sublimely above the relation of subjects to objects. "Sublime" does not mean here simply floating above, but reaching high, of which Hölderlin says at one point, man- especially the poet- could also "fall" into the height. The highness of the height of the sublime is therefore the same as the deep. The sublime relationship is that which towers above all objects and men and at the same time bears all of these. And what is that? Hölderlin does not say. We must think it for ourselves and that means to move towards it in poeticising. What usually surrounds us, the individual objects, we also name beings, or that which is. But this 'is' of beings is not itself any further being, but that which lets all beings first of all be a beyng, and thus that which tends to and surrounds it. We name it beyng. The sublime relationship in which man stands is the relationship of beyng to man, so in truth beyng itself is this relationship, in which pulls the essence of man into itself as that essence which stands in this relationship and in so standing protects and inhabits. In the open of this relationship of beyng to human essence we experience "Spirit"- it comes out of beyng and presumably prevails for beyng.

Hölderlin's saying says: "For us everything is concentrated on the spiritual." That now means: a concentration happens i.e. a gathering in the relationship of beyng to our essence. That relationship is the centre, the middle, that is everywhere as the middle of a circle which is nowhere a periphery.

"For us everything is concentrated on the spiritual"- that is no factual historical ascertaining of the situation of these times, but a thinking-poeticising naming of events which conceal themselves in beyng, that extends far out into that which is to come, that only a few, and perhaps only he who says and thinks it, are capable of foreseeing.

That which follows from the first part of the saying has the same character of poeticising-saying: "For us everything is concentrated on the spiritual, we have become poor so as to become rich." What does "poor" mean? In what does the essence of poverty lie? What does "rich" mean, so that through poverty we first become rich? "Poor" and "rich" are both concerned according to their usual meaning with possession, with having. Poverty is a not-having and indeed a doing without the necessary. Wealth is a not-doing-without the necessary, a having exceeding the necessary. The essence of poverty, however, is rooted in beyng. To be truly poor means: to be in such a way that we spare nothing, it is then the unnecessary.

To truly spare something means: to be unable to be without the unnecessary and so to belong solely to the unnecessary.

But what is the unnecessary? What is the necessary? What does necessary mean? The necessary is that which comes out of and through bare need. And what is bare need? The essence of need is according to the fundamental meaning of the word, compulsion. Neediness and the necessary and what harries are the compulsory, namely, the compulsion that forcefully obtains in our "life" what it needs for its maintenance and compels us exclusively towards the satisfaction of these needs.

The unnecessary is that which does not come from need, i.e. not from compulsion, but from the free.

Yet what is the free? From the intimating saying of our oldest language the free\* is,

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\* *Freien* meant 'to court', referring back to the relationship of beyng, but here also with the connotation of freedom in comparison to necessity.



“frî”, the unviolated, the safe-guarded, that which is not taken up into use. “To court” means originally and properly: to safe-guard, to leave something rooted in its ownmost essence through guarding. But to guard is: to keep the essence in care, in which it only stays when it can return to rest in its ownmost essence. To guard is: helping to remain in this resting, to be at its service. This alone is the appropriating essence of safe-guarding, which is in no way exhausted in the negatives of not disturbing and not using.

The free is rooted in authentic safe-guarding. The freed is that which is left in its essence and kept from the compulsion of need. The freeing of freedom turns need away or around in advance. Freedom is the turning of need. Only in freedom and its safe-guarding of the free does necessity prevail. Therefore, when we think the essence of freedom and necessity, necessity is in no way, as in all metaphysics, the opposite of freedom, but freedom alone is in itself a turning of need. [Not-wendingkeit]

Metaphysics goes so far as to teach through Kant, that necessity, namely the force of the ought and the empty compulsion of the duty to will duty, is true freedom. The metaphysical essence of freedom fulfils itself in that freedom becomes the “expression” of necessity, out of which the will to power as *the* reality and life wills itself. E. Jünger, for example, writes on the meaning of the will to power (The Worker, p.57): “To the characteristics of freedom belongs the certainty of having a share in the innermost kernel of time,- a certainty which wonderfully enlivens deeds and thoughts, in which the freedom of the perpetrator recognises itself, as the particular expression of necessity.”

But thinking the turning more deeply, everything is now the other way around. Freedom is necessity, insofar as freeing, not hounded by need, is the un-necessary.



Beyng-poor means: sparing nothing, it is then the unnecessary- to spare nothing except the freeing of freedom.

Certainly: we do not own what we spare, freely it falls to us in such a way that what is spared wishes to be owned to us. *We* do not have what spare, but what is spared has us. It can even have us in such a way that our essence solely depends upon the spared, because it belongs solely to it. It has been (once before and in what is to come) appropriated to it.

Beyng-poor – i.e. only sparing the unnecessary, i.e. belonging to the erstwhile freeing of freedom, i.e. standing in relationship to freeing openness.

But now it is beyng that lets each and every being be what it is and how it is. It is therefore precisely the freeing which lets everything rest in its essence, i.e. protects it.

When the essence of man properly stands in the relationship of freeing beyng to man, i.e. when human essence spares the unnecessary, then man has become poor in the proper sense.

Hölderlin says: “For us everything is concentrated on the spiritual, we have become poor so as to become rich.” The concentration on the spiritual means according to the saying: gathering oneself in the relation of beyng to man and standing gathered in it.

We have become poor so as to become rich. The becoming-rich does not follow from

the beyng-poor like the effect from the cause, but properly beyng-poor is in itself beyng-rich. In that we spare nothing from poverty, we have everything beforehand, we stand in the abundance of beyng, that overflows every pressing need in advance.

So, as freedom in its freeing essence is all that which turns bare need from the outset, the turning in need [Not-wendigkeit], so beyng-poor as the sparing of nothing [Nichts-entbehren] but the unnecessary [Unnötige] is itself also already being-rich.

In that for us everything is concentrated on the spiritual, beyng-poor appropriates itself. In this event human essence becomes attuned. Poverty is the grounding tone of the still concealed essence of Western peoples and their destiny.

Poverty is the mourning joy, never to be poor enough. In this still disquiet rests its releasement [Gelassenheit], that is used to getting over all necessity.

The proper danger of need and needy times lies therein, that they hinder us in the bustle of need, from truly experiencing the essence of need and out of this essence to perceive the hint of getting over need.

For example, the danger of famine and of lean years, seen in the context of the whole and ownmost Western destiny, is in no way the possibility that many people will starve, but rather that those who come through still only live in order to eat and so to live. "Life" revolves around itself in its own emptiness, by which it is put under siege in the form of a hardly noticed and unconceded boredom. In this emptiness man is run down. He mistakes the way through which he learns the essence of poverty.

We do not become poor through that which is in store under the inappropriate name “communism,” as the destiny of the historical world. We *are* only poor when for us everything is concentrated on the spiritual.

Only when the European nations have been attuned to the grounding tone of poverty, will they become the rich people of the West, that are not declining and cannot decline, because they have not yet in the least arisen. The beginning of its arising lies much more in that its people- first awakening each other in their essence- learn to know the essence of poverty, so that they can be poor.

In being-poor communism will not be avoided or got around, it will be outstripped in its essence. Only thus will we be able to truly overcome it.

The way is long. But greater still than this length is the inability truly to think and to listen to the already thought and said carefully, to hear in it the singular and primordial, and to transform what is heard and belongs to us [das Gehörte] into knowledge.

Wars are not in the position to decide historical destiny, because they already stem from spiritual decisions and they insist upon this. Neither do World Wars have this ability. But they themselves and their ending can become the occasion upon which peoples are forced to reflection. Yet this reflection itself springs from another source. It must begin to flow from the proper essence of peoples. That is why we need self-reflection in the reciprocal discussions of peoples with one another.





## Appendix 2

### Translations of the 1<sup>st</sup> Stasimon of Sophocles' *Antigone*

Greek Text:

polla; ta; deina; koujde;n ajn-  
qrwpou deinovteron pevlei:  
touÀto kai; poliouÀ pevran  
povntou xeimerivw/ novrw/  
cwreiÀ, peribrucivoisin  
perwÀn u]p! oi[dmasin, qewÀn  
te ta;n u;pertavtan, GaÀn  
a[fqiton, ajkamavtan ajpotruvetai,  
ijllomevwn ajrtovrwn e[to" eij" e[to",  
i]ppeivw// gevnei poleuvwn.

koufonovwn te fuÀlon ojr-  
nivqwn ajmfibalw;n ajgreiÀ  
kai; qhrwÀn ajgrivwn e[qnh  
povntou t! eijnalivan fuvsin  
speivraisi diktuoklwwstoi",  
perifradh;" ajnhvr: krateiÀ  
de; macanaiÀ" ajgrauvlou

qhro;" ojressibavta, lasiauvcenav q+!  
iJppon uJpaxevmen ajmfivlofon zugo;n  
ou[reiovn t! ajkmhÀta tauÀron.

kai; fqevgma kai; ajnemoven  
frovnhma kai; ajstuovmou"  
ojrga;" ejdidavxato kai; dusauvlwn  
pavgwn uJpaivqreia kai;  
duvsombra feuvgein bevlh  
pantopovro": a[poro" ejp! oujde;n e{rcetai  
to; mevllon: [Aida movnon  
feuÀxin d! ajmacavnwn fugav"  
xumpevfrastai.

sofovn ti to; macanoven  
tevcna" uJpe;r ejlpivd! e{cwn  
tote; me;n kakovn, a[lлот! ejp! ejsqlo;n e{rpei.  
novmou" peraivnwn cqono;"  
qewÀn t! e{norkon divkan,  
uJyivvmoli": a[poli" o{tw/ to; mh; kalo;n  
xuvnesti tovlma" cavrin.  
mhvt! ejmoi; parevstio"  
gevnoito mhvt! i[son fronwÀn  
o{" tavid! e{rdoi.



Standard English Translation:

H.D.F Kitto

in *Antigone, Oedipus the King, Electra*, ed., Introduction and notes by Edith Hall  
(Oxford: Oxford University Press, World's Classics Edition, 1994)

Strophe 1

Wonders are many, yet of all

Things is Man the most wonderful.

He can sail on the stormy sea

Through the tempest rage, and the loud

Waves roar around, as he makes his

Path amid the towering surge.

Earth inexhaustible, ageless, he wearies, as

Backwards and forwards, from season to season, his  
Ox-team drives along the ploughshare.

### Antistrophe 1

He can entrap the cheerful birds,  
Setting a snare, and all the wild  
Beasts of the earth he has learned to catch, and  
Fish that teem in the deep sea, with  
Nets knotted of stout cords; of  
Such inventiveness is man.  
Through his inventions he becomes lord  
Even of the beasts of the mountain: the long-haired  
Horse he subdues to the yoke on his neck, and the  
Hill-bred bull, of strength untiring.

### Strophe 2

And speech he has learned, and thought  
So swift, and the temper of mind  
To dwell within cities, and not to lie bare  
Amid the keen, biting frosts  
Or cower beneath pelting rain;  
Full of resource against all that comes to him  
Is Man. Against Death alone

He is left with no defense.  
But painful sickness he can cure  
By his own skill.

## Antistrophe 2

Surpassing belief, the device and  
Cunning that Man has attained,  
And it bringeth him now evil, now to good.  
If he observe the Law, and tread  
The righteous path God ordained,  
Honoured is he; dishonoured, the man whose  
reckless heart  
Shall make him join hands with sin:  
May I not think like him,  
Nor may such an impious man  
Dwell in my house.

'Wonders' translates *ta; deina;* in almost every English translation. They thus fail to highlight the essential polysemy which is so important to Heidegger. On the other hand, a translation such as Ian Johnston's, 'strange and wonderful things'<sup>153</sup>, fails to capture the equally important unity of the phenomenon, which Heidegger highlights most obviously in translating the plural *ta; deina;* with the singular 'das Unheimliche'.

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<sup>153</sup><http://www.mala.bc.ca/~johnstoi/sophocles/antigone.htm> 24/10/2005



The recent verse translation by Seamus Heaney, *The Burial at Thebes: Sophocles' Antigone* (London: Faber and Faber, 2004), also translates τα; δεῖνα; as 'wonders'. A comparison between this translation and those of Hölderlin would be very instructive. Whilst Heaney brings forward the progression of man into civilisation, so that it already takes place within the incursions into nature of the first strophe and antistrophe and not only in the transition point to the second strophe, his version completely misses the points of 'inner integrity', the points of essential ambiguity, which Hölderlin's verse takes such care to preserve.

German Translation used by Hans Jonas in *Das Prinzip Verantwortung: Versuch einer Ethik für die technologische Zivilisation*:

Ungeheuer ist viel, und nichts  
ungeheurer als der Mensch.  
Der nämlich, über das graue Meer  
im stürmenden Süd fährt er dahin,  
adringend unter rings  
umrauschenden Wogen. Die Erde auch,  
der Göttlichen höchste, die nimmer vergeht  
und nimmer ermüdet, schöpft er aus  
und wühlt, die Pflugschar pressend, Jahr  
um Jahr mit Rössern und Mäulern.

Leichtaufmerkender Vögel Schar  
umgarnt er und fängt, und des wilden Getiers

Stämme und des Meeres salzige Brut  
mit reichgewundernem Netzgespinst-  
er, der überaus kundige Mann.

Und wird mit Künsten Herr des Wildes,  
des freien schweifenden auf den Höfen,  
und zwingt den Nacken unter das Joch  
den dichtbemähnten des Pferdes, und  
den immer rüstigen Bergtier.

Die Rede auch und den luft'gen Gedanken und  
die Gefühle, auf denen grüdet die Stadt,  
lehrt er sich selbst, und Zuflucht zu finden vor  
unwirtlicher Höhen Glut und des Regens Ge-  
schossen.

Allbewandert er, auf kein Künftiges  
geht er unbewandert zu. Nur den Tod  
ist ihm zu fliehen versagt.

Doch von einst ratlosen Krankheiten  
hat er Entrinnen erdacht.

So über Verhoffen begabt mit der Klugheit  
erfindender Kunst,  
geht zum schlimmen er bald und bald zum  
Guten hin.

Ehrt des Landes Gesetze er und der Götter

beschworenes Recht-

hoch steht dann seine Stadt. Stadtlos ist er,  
der verwegen das Schändliche tut.

Heidegger's translation, used in both *Introductions to Metaphysics* 1935 (GA 40) and  
*Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister"* 1942 (GA 53)

Vielfältig das Unheimliche, nichts doch  
über den Menschen hinaus Unheimlicheres ragend sich regt.

Der fährt aus auf die schäumende Flut

beim Süd Sturm des Winters

und kreuzt im Gebirg

der wütiggeklüfteten Wogen.

Der Götter auch die erhabenste, die Erde,

abmüdet er die unzerstörlich Mühelose,

umstürzend sie von Jahr zu Jahr,

hintreibend und her mit den Rossen

die Pflüge.

Auch den leichtschwebenden Vogelschwarm

umgarnt er und jagt

das Tiervolk der Wildnis



und des Meeres einheimisch Gerege  
der umher sinnende Mann.  
Er überwältigt mit Listen das Tier,  
das nächtet auf Bergen und wandert,  
den rauhmähnigen Nacken des Rosses  
und den niebezwungenen Stier  
mit dem Holze umhalsend  
zwingt er ins Joch.

Auch in das Getöne des Wortes  
und ins windeilige Allesverstehen  
fand er sich, auch in den Mut  
der Herrschaft über die Städte.  
Auch wie er entfliehe, hat er bedacht,  
der Aussetzung unter die Pfeile  
der Wetter, der ungattigen auch der Fröste.

Überall hinausfahrend unterwegs, erfahrungslos ohne  
Ausweg  
kommt er zum Nichts.  
Dem einzigen Andrang vermag er, dem Tod,  
durch keine Flucht je zu wehren,  
sei ihm geglückt auch vor notvollen Siechtum  
geschicktes Entweichen.

Gewitziges wohl, weil das Gemache  
des Könnens, über Verhoffen bemeisternd,  
verfällt er einmal auf Arges  
gar, Wackeres zum anderen wieder gerät ihm.  
Zwischen die Satzung der Erde und den  
beschworenen Fug der Götter hindurch fährt er.  
Hochüberragend die Stätte  
ist er, dem immer das Unseiende seiend  
der Wagnis zugunsten.

Nicht werde dem Herde ein Trauter mir der,  
nicht auch teile mit mir sein Wähnen mein Wissen,  
der dieses führet ins Werk.

English translation by Gregory Fried and Richard Polt in *Introduction to Metaphysics*  
(New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000) pp. 156- 158

Manifold is the uncanny, yet nothing  
uncannier than man bestirs itself, rising up beyond him.  
He fares forth upon the foaming tide  
amid winter's southerly tempest  
and cruises through the summits  
of the raging, clefted swells.  
The noblest of gods as well, the earth,

the indestructibly untiring, he wearies,  
overturning her from year to year,  
driving the plows this way and that  
with his steeds.

Even the lightly gliding flock of birds  
he snares, and he hunts  
the beast folk of the wilderness  
and the brood whose home is the sea,  
the man who studies wherever he goes.

With ruses he overwhelms the beasts  
that spends its nightson mountains and roams,  
and clasping with wood  
the rough-maned neck of the steed  
and the unvanquished bull  
he forces them into the yoke.

Into the sounding of the word, as well,  
and into wind-swift all-understanding  
he found his way, and into the mettle  
to rule over cities.

He has considered, too, how he might flee  
exposure to the arrows  
of unpropitious weather and frosts.



Everywhere trying out, underway; untired, with no way out  
he comes to Nothing.

A single onslaught, death, he is unable  
ever to resist by any flight,  
even if in the face of dire illness  
deft escape should be granted him.

Clever, indeed, for he masters  
skill's devices beyond expectation,  
now he falls prey to wickedness,  
yet again valor succeeds for him.

Between the ordinance of the earth and the  
gods' sworn dispensation <Fug> he fares.  
Rising high over the site, losing the site  
is he for whom what is not, is, always  
for the sake of daring.

Let him not become a companion at my hearth,  
nor let my knowing share the delusions  
of the one who works such deeds.

Heidegger compares Hölderlin's two drafts of the ode in *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister"*.

p. 69-70, GA 53 p.85

Hölderlin: 1<sup>st</sup> Draft

(Heidegger reports that Helingrath dates this draft to 1801. The Stuttgarter Ausgabe dates it to autumn 1799. Vol.5 p.370)

Vieles Gewaltige gibts. Doch nichts

Ist gewaltiger, als der Mensch.

Denn der schweifet im grauen

Meer in stürmischer Südluft

Umher in wogenumrauschten

Geflügelten Wohnungen.

Der Götter heilige Erde, sie, die

Reine, die mühelose,

Arbeitet er um, das Pferdegeschlecht

Am leichtbewegten Pflug von

Jahr zu Jahr umtreibend.

Leichtgeschaffener Vogelart

Legt er Schlingen, verfolgt sie,

Und der Tiere wildes Volk,

Und das salzigen Meers Geschlecht

Mit listiggeschlungenen Seilen,

Der wohlerfahrne Mann.

Beherrscht mit seiner Kunst des Landes

Bergebewandelndes Wild.

Dem Nacken des Rosses wirft er das Joch

Um die Mähne und dem wilden

Ungezähmten Stiere.

*Sämliche Werke: Kleine Stuttgarter Ausgabe*, ed. Friedrich Beissener, (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1965) Vol.5 S.48

Hölderlin: 2<sup>nd</sup> Draft

(Appeared in a translation of the whole play in 1804)

Ungeheuer ist viel. Doch nichts

Ungeheurerer, als der Mensch.

Denn der, über die Nacht

Des Meers, wenn gegen den Winter wehet

Der Südwind, fährt er aus

In geflügelten sausenden Häusern.

Und der Himmlischen erhabene Erde,

Die unverderbliche, unermüdete,

Reibet er auf; mit dem strebenden Pfluge,

Von Jahr zu Jahr,

Treibt sein Verkehr er, mit dem Rossegeschlecht,

Und leichtträumender Vögel Welt

Bestrickt er, und jagt sie;

Und wilder Tiere Zug,

Und des Pontos salzbelebte Natur



Mit gesponnenen Netzen,  
Der kundige Mann.  
Und fängt mit Künsten das Wild,  
Das auf Bergen übernachtet und schweift.  
Und dem rauhmähnigen Rosse wirft er um  
Den Nacken das Joch, und dem Bergen  
Bewandelnden unbezähmten Stier.

Und die Red und den luftigen  
Gedanken und städtebeherrschenden Stolz  
Hat erlernt er, und übelwohnender  
Hügel feuchte Lüfte, und  
Die unglücklichen zu fliehen, die Pfeile. Allbewandert,  
Unbewandert. Zu nichts kommt er.  
Der Toten künftigen Ort nur  
Zu fliehen weiß er nicht,  
Und die Flucht unbeholfener Seuchen  
Zu überdenken.  
Von Weisem etwas, und das Geschickte der Kunst  
Mehr, als er hoffen kann, besitzend,  
Kommt einmal er auf Schlimmes, das andre zu Gutem.  
Die Gesteze kränkt er, der Erd und Naturgewaltger  
Beschwornes Gewissen;  
Hochstädtisch kommt, unstädtisch  
Zu nichts er, wo das Schöne

Mit ihm ist und mit Frechheit.

Nicht sei am Herde mit mir,

Noch gleichgesinnet,

Wer solches tut.

*Sämliche Werke: Kleine Stuttgarter Ausgabe*, ed. Friedrich Beissener, (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1965) Vol.5 S.238- 239

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